ABSTRACT

MISSIONAL SPIRITUALITY: INVITATION TO LISTEN

by

David Mullens

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effect that the contemplative practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist Church congregants who volunteered to participate in a twelve-week spiritual formation process. Individuals from North Judson United Methodist Church agreed to practice silence and solitude daily for twelve weeks. A questionnaire was given before and after the twelve-week period to measure any change in missional identity. Individuals from Knox United Methodist Church agreed to be the control group and, as such, participated in both the pretest and posttest questionnaires.

The research indicated that there was a positive relationship between one's missional identity and contemplative practices. The research confirmed that contemplative practices strengthen the sense of God's presence and desire to follow God's will in one's daily activity resulting in an increase in love. If practicing silence, solitude, and reflective reading for fifteen minutes over three months resulted in a dramatic change in missional identity, then a life that cultivates these practices could be transformative. If the leaders of the church not only encouraged others to practice disciplines faithfully but also were faithful to these practices, they could find a stronger missional identity characterized by God's love.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

Eugene H. Peterson was surprised when an admired pastor referred to his work as "running a church" (67). Peterson's expectation of being a pastor was one of prayer, leading worship, teaching Scripture, and "representing the life of Christ in the human traffic of the everyday" (67). The dichotomy Peterson discerned is still present. Culture views clergy as a chief executive officer rather than as a pastor. After twenty years of ministry, I have discovered that laity also share in the *running a church* attitude. Pastors have taught laity, unintentionally, how to focus on functional tasks, rather than how to live the life of God in the world. The business of the day is to keep the church doors open and nicely painted and make sure it has plenty of programs. A nice church and good programs may be important, but many times in the pursuit of such goals, Christians forget the mission of God.

My first appointment was while I was a student in seminary and I was apprehensive. I had recently completed my undergraduate degree in computer technology and wondered what I could offer to Christians who had been attending church longer than I had been alive. To add to my apprehension, I had only been a Christian for about six years. My fear was that with my limited Christian life experience I would not be able to lead individuals who had been Christians for decades. What I discovered surprised and confused me. My lack of Christian life experience was never a problem. I was able to lead and never thought that I lacked experience or knowledge. As the bishop appointed me to other churches, one trend became evident: My first appointment was not an

isolated case. What I found, to my surprise, were individuals who attended church week after week and viewed themselves as faithful Christians, yet their daily lives and the values they used to make decisions were not reflective of the faith they claimed to believe.

The church is not an entity with its own will but reflects the lives, attitudes, and behaviors of those who make it their community of faith. Individuals lacking vibrant spiritual lives make lifeless churches. When the lives of those who support the church do not reflect the doctrine, spirit, and discipline of a dynamic spiritual life, the church suffers. John Charles Dendiu, Jr. discovered that while spiritual intimacy is supposedly a necessity of those preparing for ministry, the tendency is to emphasis various practical skills instead (1-2). My concern is that those I serve do not see a connection between what they believe and how they live their lives, and the church reflects this same separation.

Research indicates a disconnection between what Americans claim is important to them and their practice of those things (Spears 1-2). While a Gallup poll finds America's spirituality index is at 74.7 percent ("New Penn/Gallup Poll"), the Barna Group reports only 45 percent of adults read their Bible in any given week outside of church ("Annual Barna Group Survey"). Another Barna study reports 62 percent of those surveyed reported to being "deeply spiritual," yet their top priorities did not correspond with how they viewed themselves. The conclusion was that a "significant disconnect" existed between people's perceptions of their religious commitment and their practice ("Americans Reveal Their Top Priority").

The disconnection between belief and action reveals itself when individuals neglect practices that create space for God to lead and guide them. Guy Brewer tells of a new church start where the planning and information coming from his district, conference, and the General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church was void of any prayer focus. He confesses that prayer was not only missing from the plans for the new church but also from his life (1-3). Brewer's experience resonates with my own, and the research previously mentioned confirms it. People love to view themselves as deeply spiritual, whether or not they observe spiritual practices. Christians may believe they are allowing Christ to lead them, but the real test is if their attitudes, values, and behavior are reflective of a missional worldview. Missional ecclesiology is an excellent model for spiritual life because it focuses on incarnational living, fulfilling the mission of God and being faithful to God who sends people into the world.

My current church is no exception to the issues facing the general church. While the people of North Judson United Methodist Church are good people who support the church and desire to be deeply spiritual, I sense an unwillingness to engage in missional practices that would enable them to receive the fulfillment of their desire. The problem is that the reluctance to abandon oneself to God through daily spiritual practices prevents a person from living a missionally focused life.

Purpose

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effect that the contemplative practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist Church congregants who volunteered to participate in a twelve-week spiritual formation process.

Research Questions

The following research questions helped in understanding how the formative practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading affect one's missional identity.

Research Question #1

What was the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist congregants based on the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale prior to the introduction of the spiritual formation process?

Research Question #2

What was the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist congregants based on the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale after participating in the spiritual formation process?

Research Question #3

How did the spiritual formation process affect the participants' missional identity?

Definition of Terms

I used the following terms in this study.

Missional describes a church or a person who is an instrument, agent, foretaste, and sign of the kingdom of God (Guder 221). Churches and individuals are missional when they realize that God sends them to live out his mission and are faithful to his sending.

Missional identity is living the prayer "thy will be done." It is awareness of God's presence and connecting to God's presence in such a way that God's mission becomes a reality in one's life. Cultivating a missional identity allows God's presence to guide and

direct one in daily activities. The most authentic prayer of someone who is cultivating missional identity is "thy will be done." Jesus' prayer becomes a living reality.

Silence is the ancient spiritual practice of placing oneself before God in order to listen to God's directions.

Solitude is drawing away from others to be present to Christ. It is allowing the self to become detached, not just from other people but from media and anything else that might be distracting.

Reflective reading is slowing down and allowing a text to master one's life. Instead of coming to a text in order to obtain information or to gain mastery over it, individuals place themselves before a text so God might form them through it.

Ministry Intervention

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effect that the contemplative practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist Church congregants who volunteered to participate in a twelve-week spiritual formation process. Before the twelve weeks of daily practices began, I introduced the practices of silence and solitude and gave the participants a book to help them focus on the practice of silence, solitude, and reflective reading. They had one short reading per week and a Scripture passage focusing on the life of Jesus and addressing the missional practices of incarnation, mission of God, and God sending his people into the world. The study used two groups of participants. The control group took both the pre- and post-questionnaires, measuring their spiritual practices and missional identity. The intervention group took both questionnaires and participated in a spiritual formation process. Each week the experimental group participants visited a Web site to

record how many days during the week they completed the practices. Two weeks after the twelve-week process ended, the participants completed the same questionnaire to access any changes. I compared the two questionnaires, along with the amount of time spent in reflective practices to determine whether silence, solitude, and reflective reading had any effect on the participants' spiritual attitudes as defined by missional ecclesiology.

Context

The United Methodist Church is a mainline Protestant global church whose roots began in eighteenth-century England. The United Methodist Church has a wonderful past, but the current decline threatens its future in America ("Data Resources"). The intervention occurred within this wider context.

The Indiana Annual Conference is new, created after merging the North Indiana Conference with the South Indiana Conference. The two conferences merged in 2010 after years of decline in worship attendance, membership, and conference support. The new conference is approximately twice the size as the previous conference in terms of geography and number of churches, while retaining only half the conference staff. To address the increased workload of diminishing staff, the conference created new structures to distribute the administrative workload, which required new leadership from both pastors and laity.

North Judson United Methodist Church is located in North Judson, Indiana, in a rural town of 1,500. It is one of three United Methodist churches in a county of 27,000 people. The church consists mainly of middle-class individuals. From 1986 to 1993, the church experienced its greatest growth with an attendance of 180 in 1993. The next year the church began a slow decline plateauing in the 2000s with around 130 in worship

attendance. Traditionally, the church has been a strong programmatic church with youth groups, children's ministry, liturgical dance ministry, a praise band, and opportunities for service on various committees. A few individuals participated in the United Methodist Church's Disciple Bible Study, but none of the participants took a leadership role. After a pastoral transition and a four-month interim pastoral appointment, Disciple Bible Study never reconvened. The church has had short-term study groups during the Advent and Lenten seasons. A year before the study began, a men's small group started meeting, averaging around eight men weekly.

Methodology

The study explored the impact the formative spiritual practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on missional identity. The project utilized a mixed-methods quasi-experimental research design utilizing descriptive statistics that focus on multiple outcomes.

Participants

The participants were volunteers from the Knox and North Judson United Methodist Churches. Twenty volunteers from the Knox United Methodist Church formed the control group, and thirty-four volunteers from the North Judson United Methodist Church served as the treatment group. Volunteers from the churches were self-selected.

Instrumentation

The study utilized three quantitative instruments, yielding both a numerical and qualitative analysis. First, participants from the control and experimental groups filled out a demographic instrument that gathered information about the participants of the study. The demographic instrument also contained a qualitative question about the participants'

attitude toward silence and solitude. Second, participants in the treatment and control groups took the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale questionnaire as a pretest to establish a baseline. Third, during the study the experimental participants made weekly entries into a Weekly Practice Activity survey. Fourth, participants were administered the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale questionnaire as a posttest for comparative purposes. The instruments supported the study by measuring changes in participants' missional identity.

Variables

Within the treatment group, the independent variables were the daily spiritual practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading. The dependent variables were the participants' responses related to missional identity. Intervening variables included participants' inability or lack of desire to complete the study, not making an entry into the Weekly Practice Activity survey, personality preferences conflicting with the spiritual practices, or not completing the posttest. The control group was compared to the dependent variables on pre-post only.

Data Collection

The treatment group participated in all the data collection. The control group participated in the pre-post and demographic data collection only. The quantitative Daily Spiritual Experience Scale questionnaire collected data about participants' spiritual practices along with their missional identity before a twelve-week process of spiritual formation. The same Daily Spiritual Experience Scale questionnaire collected data about participants' spiritual practices along with their missional identity two weeks after the spiritual formation process ended. The Weekly Practice Activity survey recorded the frequency with which the participants of the treatment group were able to participate in

the daily practices. Frequency of participation determined if greater participation had a positive effect on missional identity. The demographic indicator collected demographic information that allowed me to perform deeper analysis based on demographic categories.

Data Analysis

For the treatment group, the quantitative Daily Spiritual Experience Scale questionnaire data gave insight into the participants' spiritual practices and their missional identity. Participants completed the questionnaire both pre- and posttest to correlate changes occurring due to the daily spiritual practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading. The Weekly Practice Activity survey assessed how consistently participants completed their daily practices. The demographic instrument gathered information to understand the background of the participants. The qualitative question gave insight into thoughts and attitudes concerning silence and solitude. For the treatment group, pre-post analyses compared their questionnaires to the pre-post questionnaires of the control group.

Generalizability

This study was limited to the treatment group of the congregants of North Judson United Methodist Church in North Judson, Indiana, during the months of October through December 2010. The congregation mostly consists of white, middle-class individuals. The study was limited in scope to a particular congregation, at a particular time, with a narrow demographic makeup. Other congregations wanting to strengthen missional identity may be able to adapt the spiritual practices and principles. The use of the control group offers greater generalizability.

Theological Foundation

The Lord's Prayer has deep connections in the Christian faith. Some congregations pray the Lord's Prayer every Sunday and many Christians pray it daily. In the prayer, Jesus prays, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10, NRSV). One of the prayer's main petitions is that God's will would be done on earth, the way it is done in heaven. Although Christians pray for God's kingdom to come to earth, they may not be living out their prayer. Even with so much familiarity, questions remain concerning the commitment to God's will in one's life.

The world, as we experience it, is not like heaven. The world is a place of brokenness because of sin. God's will is not done on earth the way it is in heaven. However, Israel dreamed of a time when God would again be king and put everything back to rights (Wright, *Christian Origins* 1: 334; *Simply Christian* 80). No longer would sin rule the world. The world would be the way God intended. God's will would be done on earth, as it was in heaven.

Jesus fulfilled that dream when he came (Wright, *Simply Christian* 80). Through the Incarnation, God put on flesh and stepped into the world. Jesus was the bearer of God's kingdom and began his ministry by proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus' activities directly related to God's kingdom. His focus was doing God's will. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus declared that he was an agent of the Father (John 5:12-24, 30, 43; 6:38; 7:16-18, 29; 8:16, 19, 29, 42; 10:34-38; 12:44-50; 14:10-11,31; 17:4, 18; 18:11). Jesus' desire was to fulfill the will and mission of the One who sent him.

Jesus' desire is particularly evident in John 12 and the Garden of Gethsemane accounts (Matt. 26:31-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46). Even as Jesus struggled with God's plan, he chose to live out God's will. He chose to fulfill God's mission rather than follow his own agenda. His will, as he said (John 6:38), was to do the will of the Father. Paul reflects on Jesus' obedience to God's will in the second chapter of Philippians. Paul observes that instead of exploiting that he was the very form of God, Jesus became obedient even when doing so meant death upon a cross (Phil. 2:8). The essence of Jesus was submission to the Father's will.

Jesus commissioned his disciples in John 20:21 by saying that he was sending them in the same manner God had sent him. In order to understand one's sending, one must understand that Jesus saw his life as an extension of the life of God. The work he did was in direct response to God's will. His words and works were literally the words and works of God. Jesus' worldview was one of surrender to God's will. Jesus was living out the life of God incarnationally.

The essence of discipleship is incarnational. Even though individuals are not fully divine like Jesus, God has placed his image within them (*imago Dei*). Christ is revealed to the world through God's image (Merton, *Inner Experience* 11-12). Thomas Merton writes, "The life of Adam, that is to say the 'breath' which was to give actuality and existence and movement to the whole person of man, had mysteriously proceeded from the intimate depths of God's own life" (52). God's life, mysteriously, is hidden within each person. God's image is a reflection of God within one's life. The purpose of humanity is to reflect faithfully God's image. C. P. M. Jones writes, "God the creator of the universe has made *me* [original emphasis] in his own image by no process of mass

production; I am a specially designed reproduction of his image. So there is a special place in his providence that only I can fill" (4). God creates each person with a purpose, a unique call, which only he or she can fulfill. When one abandons oneself to God through Christ, he or she connects to that original image, the original *breath* God breathed into him or her. God has given a mission. The issue of incarnational living is whether individuals are willing to surrender their agenda so God can fulfill his mission.

Incarnational living is living out God's unique call. Dr. M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. discusses incarnation by explaining, "[O]ur 'word,' this word with a small 'w' that God is breathing forth, is incarnate in us" (*Shaped by the Word* 35). While individuals are not the *Word* becoming flesh, they are nonetheless a *word* of God. That word finds expression as individuals live out their lives (36). Every moment, every event is an opportunity to move closer to this unique communal call (van Kaam and Muto 96). As individuals say, "Yes," to God's will, God forms them into the persons he created them to be. When individuals say, "No," they discover they are becoming more and more deformed, moving further away from who they truly are.

The goal of incarnational living is holy love. Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God and love others (Matt. 22:37-40). Holy love is without self-interest. Kenneth J. Collins points out that Wesley took great pains to link the love of God with God's holiness (*Theology of John Wesley* 20-21). The love of incarnational living is nothing less than God's holy love flowing through the life of the believer. One can see selfless love in the lives and works of the saints; their goal was love of God and neighbor. Whether one describes this love as union or holiness, it is still a gift, but the believer can be in a position to receive it (Merton, *Inner Experience* 7).

Spiritual practices create an atmosphere where incarnational living can take place. Individuals must choose to allow God's will to be their own. Daily spiritual practices create space in Christians' lives enabling them to release control to God. The practice of silence is the best practice to break individuals of the desire to control their lives. When individuals practice silence, they realize they are not doing anything. Any growth that occurs is not because of anything they did but is a gift of God. Realizing that all is a gift creates space for God, which places individuals in a receptive posture. They are able to receive and listen. As individuals listen, they hear the voice of God within their souls (1 Kings 19:11-12) and begin to follow.

The core of missional ecclesiology is God sending his people to live out his mission incarnationally. The mission of God becomes alive through the followers of Jesus both individually and corporately. As individuals humbly surrender to God and live the prayer "Thy will be done," they discover the life they were created to live. Surrendering to God's purposes will revitalize the church and empower Christians to touch the world with God's holy love.

The lives of those who make up the church must be missional if the world is going to experience God's love. Through missional living God's love flows through the believer into the world. As followers of Christ go into the world to live out the mission of God, not only are their lives transformed, so is the world. Through these followers, God's will is done and heaven kisses the earth. The first step toward missional living is relinquishing control and coming before God daily to listen.

Overview

Chapter 2 reviews literature associated with the purpose of the church, missional ecclesiology, spiritual formation, and the spiritual practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading. Chapter 3 includes discussion and explanation for the design of the study, research questions, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, variables, and data analysis. Chapter 4 details the findings of the study. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the conclusions derived from interpretation of the data, as well as practical applications of the conclusions and further study possibilities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

Daily spiritual practices create space for God to transform believers into people of love by following God's will. The lack of spiritual practices in individuals' lives hinders them from faithfully living out the mission of God.

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effect that the contemplative practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist Church congregants who volunteered to participate in a twelve-week spiritual formation process.

Theological Framework

When a lawyer asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was (Matt. 22:34-40), Jesus responded by combining the Shema, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might," from Deuteronomy 6:5 with the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" from Leviticus 19:18. Jesus said that the Law and the prophets hung on the combination of these commands. Both Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:25-28 have similar but varied episodes. Mark records a scribe asking the question and responding that the love of God and neighbor is more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices. Luke's account has a lawyer asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus tosses the question back to him, asking him what he read. The lawyer's answer echoes Jesus' answer in Matthew. However, the lawyer also asked who was a neighbor, and Jesus responded by telling a story about a Samaritan.

While the Synoptic accounts vary, the message is clear: Love is the essence of faithfulness to God. The gospel witness is that love is the goal. Everything else pales in comparison because as Jesus stated, all the laws, commandments, and prophets hang on these two commandments of love. God has called his people to be people of love. The prophetic witness and law depend on love. By quoting the Torah, Jesus was not establishing a new commandment but defining the essence of a faithful life in which every faithful Jew would resonate. A listener hearing Jesus proclaim this commandment as the greatest would have remembered the two commands in the context of Israel's history (Kreglinger 88) and understood these two commands as the culmination of their faith.

Love of Neighbor and the Golden Rule

Jesus defined love as the overarching standard of faithfulness, yet problems can be found with both the love command, which is to love one's neighbor as oneself, and the Golden Rule, which is often linked to the love command (Stanglin 357-71). A current debate is how the love commandment and the Golden Rule can serve as an ethical framework for one's behavior (357-71; Liu 681-94). Qingping Liu argues that while Christianity has been viewed as a religion of love, historically these same commands have been used to destroy those who do not love God, thus creating a paradox where loving God conflicts with loving one's neighbor (681-94). Thomas W. Ogletree responds by noting the seemingly ambiguity of what constitutes love (695-700). The individual, subjectively, defines what constitutes love, or who to love and to what degree. If one is going to treat others the way he or she wants to be treated, those actions are subjective. The only criterion is how the individual wants to be treated. Therefore, his or her ethical

response is to treat others in the same manner. The problem one encounters is that the definition of what is good or love has no foundation. If an individual is sadistic or a drug addict, his or her definition of desired treatment may take on a corrupt connotation (Stanglin 357-71). Using personal preference as the standard for what constitutes love leaves a fuzzy definition of love.

In order to be faithful to Jesus' command, one must struggle with what standard to use in loving one's neighbor as oneself. Luke addressed loving others when a lawyer asked Jesus, "[W]ho is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29) The lawyer wanted some type of limit on who he should consider a neighbor. Any limit on who was a neighbor would put the individual in a position of creating a standard of whom one would and should love. Jesus did not intend for individuals to determine the standard of what should be done and to whom it would be done. Jesus never answered the lawyer's question but painted a picture of how a neighbor would act to someone who was in need (Ogletree 698). Keith D. Stanglin points out that for the love command or Golden Rule to have an ethical effect, it must remained linked with the Decalogue (368), which, he argues, was Jesus' intention. The Decalogue was the boundary for the definition of love. The Shema relates to the first table of the Decalogue while the second table relates to love of neighbor (Cockerill 18). Without a relationship to the Decalogue, the definition of love remains subjective.

Another issue with the love command is the tendency to read psychological commitments to self-esteem into the text (Makujina 211-25). The argument is as follows: The only way to love one's neighbor as oneself is to have good self-esteem. Following this logic, one detaches the love command from the Decalogue, leaving the love

command to become motivation for loving oneself better. The reference to loving oneself in Leviticus 19:18 is not based in self-esteem but in a pragmatic and beneficial mode of love that does not need to be taught but is intrinsic (Makujina 211-25; Nordstrom 25-27). Even individuals with low self-esteem show an ability to love themselves by self-care. Pairing Leviticus 19:18 with self-esteem clouds the real message of the text, which is to love one's neighbor (Makujina 211-25).

Love is difficult to define and even more difficult to practice. Because love is an emotion, definitions are problematic. Individuals believe they know what they mean when they say, "I love," but their understanding does not necessarily mean they understand what others mean whey they say, "I love." In English, love has a wide range of meanings from a general affinity toward someone or something to a deep affection and commitment to the object of love (Chapman 228-48). While individuals should know the meaning of loving intrinsically, greater reflection shows they may not (Chapman 242-48; Powell 12-13). Adding to the confusion is the difficulty of teaching someone how to love or how to love in a way that reflects Jesus' intention. One cannot simply state that faithfulness is to love God and others because culturally this statement is no longer connected to the Decalogue (Stanglin 365-66). One must determine the quality or degree love is to have and find ways to lead others into a God-referenced and other-referenced love.

Self-Referenced Love

Individuals want to believe they love others and God, even when their actions do not reflect love. Sin has caused love to be self-referenced, causing confusion regarding what love requires (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 84). Examples abound of the distance

between love in word and love in action. Many thank God for their success and say they love God. If asked if they loved others, they would say, "Yes," perhaps even believing they are fulfilling the greatest commandment (Powell 13). However, when one sees the types of lives those same individuals live, one wonders how they define love and what their criterion for measuring love is. The standard of love is the self. Even though individuals believe they are loving, their love is defined by their own wants and desires. Love is all about them or, in other words, self-referenced. Self-referenced love is not the love Jesus commanded.

Love Defined

Jesus said loving God and loving others is the hinge on which every commandment hangs. Because Jesus made love of God and others the standard measure of love, one must understand what Jesus meant by love (Nordstrom 1-22). The importance of understanding Jesus' definition of love seems like an obvious statement, but regarding love, people are content to live in their self-referenced worldview and believe they love well. If individuals are unable to understand what Jesus meant by love, they are in danger of believing they are fulfilling the greatest commandment while living far from it. While a simple definition is difficult to find, Scripture contains guidance on what love is and what love is not.

First, love is not breaking the commandments. Jesus said that love is the fulfillment of the commandments and the prophets. When individuals break any of those commandments, or resist the prophets, they are not walking in the kind of love Jesus commanded. Using the Decalogue as an example, one realizes that murder is not love. Stealing is not operating out of love. Lust is not operating out of love. When an

individual breaks any of the commandments, the result is a loss of love. If individuals say that they are people of love, yet their lifestyle is in opposition to the commandments and the prophets, their love is not the same quality or degree to which Jesus referred and commanded.

Second, love is incarnate in the life of Jesus. In Jesus, love put on flesh and blood. Jesus is the definition of holy love. His life serves as an illustration and example of love. John writes that the Word, which was from the beginning, put on flesh and came to earth to live among humanity (John 1:1-14). In coming to earth, God displayed his love in flesh and bone. Jesus told Nicodemus that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son in order that the world might have life (John 3:16).

Jesus as Love Defined

In John 13:34-35, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment to love, the way he has loved them. Jesus defines the quality of love his followers are to have by pointing to his actions and the love he has for his disciples. In Jesus' sacrifice, the love he displays is an incarnation of Leviticus 19:18. Jesus' life and sacrifice are the definition of love. Throughout his life Jesus showed the type of love his disciples are to have. Most definitions of love are self-referenced. The love Jesus calls for is other-referenced or, rather, God-referenced. Understanding the distinction is crucial because Christians may believe they are fulfilling the call to love when they are not.

Jesus put flesh and blood on the greatest commandment by telling his disciples to love one another as he had loved them. The love they experienced in Jesus was to be the character of their love. Jesus did not restrict the command to love to the original

disciples. John understood that to be a faithful disciple meant to love all (1 John 3:11-24), and by love the world would know who were Jesus' disciples (John 13:35).

Love as Incarnation

The love required to be a disciple is ultimately a gift. The quality and degree of love Jesus displayed was not from a human source but from the essence of God (1 John 4:8). Loving others as Jesus loved requires individuals to be incarnational. On their own, individuals are unable to love as Jesus loved. Love of God and neighbor is filtered through the incarnation (York 116). The only way to fulfill the new commandment of Jesus is to allow the life of God to put on flesh through the life of the individual. As individuals will what God wills, they are able to love others the way God has loved them (Story 151-58). The love of a disciple is not his or her own love but the love of the Father poured out through the disciple's life.

Try as one might, to love as Jesus loved is impossible. Human love is self-referenced. As individuals grow in Christ, they are able to love as Jesus loved (Powell 96-97). However, in order to love as Jesus loved, they must allow Jesus to love through them. Jesus' love was not self-referenced but God-referenced. His desire was to do the will of the Father. In John 20:21 Jesus sent his followers into the world on a God-referenced mission. As individuals allow God's will to be done in their lives, his love puts on flesh. Incarnational love is God's other-referenced love.

Love Lost

With Jesus proclaiming that love of God and neighbor fulfills the commandments and the prophets, one would think the church would emphasize understanding and living this type of love, yet the focus of various discipleship programs, spiritual formation

groups, and general church resources do not reflect such an emphasis. The church is full of activities that produce individuals who know the letter of the law but do not always live out the Spirit of the law, which is love. Perhaps this lack of emphasis explains the disconnection between belief and action. Those outside the church have noticed the disconnection (York; Kinnaman and Lyons 29-30). Jesus said that the world would know his disciples because of the love they had for one another (John 13:34-35), but the church continues to struggle with love.

John Wesley recognizes that for a Christian to be faithful to God's call, he or she must live a life characterized by love of God and others (Wesley, Outler, and Heitzenrater 918). Wesley's focus on holy living was not a focus on regulations of the law, or even of performing disciplines of faith, but on the love of God and love of neighbor (Cockerill 13-14). A holy life does not consist of legalistic dos and do nots but love (Kreglinger 33). Holiness is loving God and loving others as Jesus loved them.

Love as Ecclesiology

Since love is the ultimate goal, the church's ecclesiology should reflect God's love. If one is unable to love, until one is loved, then the church is the best instrument to show love (Story 151-58). The inability for individuals to be open to God's love causes the inability to love. Once an individual is open to and experiences God's love, then he or she is able to follow Jesus in a life of love. Jesus was secure in God's love, knowing the Father loved him. He knew where he came from and where he was going (John 8:14). When individuals follow Jesus' example, they discover a security in love, enabling them to love God and love others.

When other agendas take precedence over God's agenda of love, the church forfeits love in favor of pragmatism. Jesus' expectation is that love would characterize his followers, and his expectation extends to the church. Any lessening of the gospel's call of love creates crises in the church (York 116-18). To love as Jesus loved requires making Jesus Lord.

Love is the standard for measuring the church's faithfulness to God's calling. North American culture, however, has made the sign of a healthy church the number of people served, the quality of the programs, and the size of the building rather than how much love flows from the community (Slaughter 99). Leaders, worried about losing members, try to find techniques and programs that produce growth, many times leaving God out of the process completely (Hirsch and Hirsch 813). As leaders focus on techniques and methods that promise measurable results, the temptation is to look past God's agenda and focus on good ideas that work.

The focus on such statistical measurements takes the focus off being faithful to God's mission. Lesslie Newbigin remarks that the New Testament is more concerned with the disciples' faithfulness than with their numbers and that the reign of God is not dependent on the church's growth (*Open Secret* 125). In commenting about missionary work he writes, "The result of his work, in other words, will be a community that acknowledges Jesus Christ as the supreme Lord of life" (128). Being faithful to the lordship of Jesus is the goal that the church needs to embrace. The goal of faith has become church attendance rather than being an instrument of God's reign, which would result in incarnational love and discipleship (Slaughter 712). Instead of focusing on the number of people who come through the door, the real concern is whether those who

have come are living out God's reign in their lives. Willowcreek's recent revelation in their *Reveal* project shows even the strongest statistical growing churches may not be doing as well as they believe in the area of spiritual growth (Hawkins and Parkinson 3). Focusing on statistical measurements creates an environment where churches equate faithfulness with church growth even though growth can take place while being unfaithful to the call of God. Faithfulness is whether the church is living out the proclamation that "Jesus is Lord."

Culture has created a dualism between one's daily life (action) and faith (belief). The language used to describe church reflects this dualism (Guder 80; Hunsberger and Van Gelder 337). Church is a place to go at a certain time and a place where certain things happen (Guder 80; Hunsberger and Van Gelder 337; McNeal 22). Missional ecclesiology addresses dualistic approaches by focusing on God's reign in the life of the believer and the life of the church. Missional ecclesiology reflects God's call upon the believer's whole life and unites life and faith. Individuals are missional because the Holy Spirit of God is within them, sending them into the world daily. Communities of sent ones, or *communitas* (Hirsch 2886-3133) form within the local context. Just as Jesus was God incarnate, believers, because of the Holy Spirit, incarnate God's mission in the world, both individually and corporately.

Missional Ecclesiology

Spiritual formation is a vital component of a missional life. Cultivating a missional identity is a journey (Roxburgh and Boren 364) toward God's reign in one's life. Individuals tend to follow their own definitions, categories, and models. God desires individuals to follow Jesus in trust (John 3:36). One cannot control God but must respond

by being willing to follow him. Through spiritual formation, one connects to Jesus at emotional, mental, and spiritual levels. In other words, one learns to trust Jesus to lead.

The Western church has trusted culture and allowed culture to form or, rather, deform its faith. When Newbigin returned to England as a missionary from India, he observed that the Western church had allowed culture to affect how it viewed its identity and mission (Roxburgh and Boren 38-44). Definitions of culture vary, such as the method a group of people use to pass on their way of life generationally (Newbigin, *Foolishness* 47), what people "make of the world" (Crouch 191), the totality of human activity and its result (Niebuhr 32), "a set of social understandings and practices," (Guder 113) and as a "system of beliefs, values, and behaviors" (Hunsberger and Van Gelder 53). Culture is the air people breathe (Guder 20) and determines their outlook, values, and perceptions of reality. Understanding anything apart from culture is difficult (Newbigin, *Open Secret* 88; Niebuhr 39). Individuals view everything through their cultural lens, including the gospel (Guder 18; Newbigin, *Foolishness* 55-62). Because culture is such a powerful influence, awareness of how much influence culture wields is vital.

Christendom is one cultural force that affects the church. Christendom began in the eleventh century with the formalization of the church—state symbiosis, but its roots go back to Constantine's acceptance of Christianity (Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things* 8). The term Christendom describes the relationship between church and culture (Guder 48) with the church providing for the religious arm of the government and the state providing for the secular (Carter 14). Before Constantine sanctioned Christianity as the official religion of the state, the church had to operate differently because of persecution. Approval by the state placed the church and, as a result, Christians in a culturally

privileged position (Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things* 8). The church was able to operate in openness, which changed how it viewed its mission.

While embracing the new privilege might have been the most faithful path for the church at the time (Guder 192; Newbigin, *Foolishness* 1290), it nevertheless changed the identity of the church (Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things* 8). No longer was the church a subversive movement; instead, it could enjoy all the benefits of being culturally acceptable. Having cultural acceptance changed the church's outward appearance and nature (Guder 191). The church, some argue, allowed the state to determine its purpose rather than allowing the gospel to do so (112-13; Hauerwas and Willimon 340). The result was that the role of supporting the state's secular agenda replaced Jesus' call of love.

Even though the church had success supporting the agenda of the state under Christendom, modernity displaced that function. The church understood its purpose under Christendom, but the Enlightenment brought with it an identity crisis. The Enlightenment's focus on reason, science, and philosophy usurped the church's role (Hirsch 717). Modernity, which was the result of the Enlightenment, replaced Christendom (Guder 20-45). Even though the church found itself in a post-Christendom culture, it continued to operate from a Christendom perspective (Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things* 9). The church was unwilling to recognize the changes ensuing within the culture. Darrell L. Guder explains that the Enlightenment caused a shift in how culture viewed society and the individual, leaving the church with functional Christendom in place of the societal privilege it previously held (48-55). The task of supporting the agenda of the state under Constantine was slowly replaced by modernity

and then postmodernity (48-55; Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things* 13; Hauerwas and Willimon 147), eroding the cultural and societal roles the church traditionally used to define itself (Hunsberger and Van Gelder 41, 179; Hauerwas and Willimon 108-40). The transition from Christendom to modernity and then postmodernity left the church wondering what its purpose was.

Under Christendom, the church was secure in the role and function it served. When the Enlightenment replaced the church's function with science and reason, the church needed to justify its existence. The loss of function created a vacuum that has cast the church into confusion about its identity and mission (Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things* 13). No longer having the role of underwriting "democracy" (Hauerwas and Willimon 345), the church needed to rediscover a mandate for its existence. In doing so the church has looked to the dominate culture for direction. In its quest for a new purpose, the church has allowed cultural pulsations to set its agenda.

Consumerism is what currently grounds American society. Culture has provided a market-driven consumerism that pushes religion from the public to the private realm of culture (Hirsch 1354 -92). Alan Hirsch comments on how the church understood its role under Christendom:

> In the Christendom era the church perceived itself as central to society and hence operated in the attractional mode. In this situation people come to church to hear the gospel, to be taught in the faith, and to partake of the sacraments. (787)

In the post-Christendom era, the church operates on the periphery of society while trying to regain the position it has lost. In doing so, the North American church has, once again, become accommodating to the culture, this time consumerism, and continues to look past its biblically centered mission (Roxburgh and Boren 45; Hauerwas and Willimon 345).

Instead of mission being the reason for a church's existence, it has become a function, something to do (Guder 82). Mission has become one of many products the church provides to the culture.

Under consumerism, the church defines its purpose in consumeristic terms. Proponents of missional ecclesiology believe the North American church has become a vendor of religious goods and services (Guder 170; Hirsch and Hirsch 107; McNeal 23; Roxburgh and Boren 564; Van Gelder 193; Hunsberger 146; Dawn, Peterson, and Santucci 232) and, under functional Christendom, a supporter of the culture and state (Guder 112-13). One can observe a vendor mentality both outside and inside the church. Those outside expect to receive services from the church, whether those services are political or social, while those inside the church endeavor to create goods and services that people desire or to improve upon what the church already offers. Viewing the church as a purveyor of goods and services may cause followers of Christ to spend time poring over demographics to discover the felt needs of their community (Conn and Ortiz 306; Warren 155-72). Once felt needs have been determined, then the work of the church is to create services that meet those felt needs.

The by-product of a consumer-focused approach is an attractional model of ministry. If the mission of the church is to provide religious goods and services to the culture, then understanding what culture desires and delivering desired products is crucial. How well the organization is meeting the needs of its customers becomes the standard of effectiveness, as with any product-focused organization (Hirsch 1395). Operating under a consumer-focused approach creates an environment where measurements and success are determined by the happiness of customers and how well

the organization meets the customer's needs (1409). The number of individuals using a church's services and programs is the defining sign of success.

Statistical Measurements of Success

Under an attractional model, statistical measurement of attendance and programming determine success rather than faithfully fulfilling biblical mandates to mission. The attractional model does not reject the biblical mandate but ignores it in favor of meeting felt needs. An atmosphere that values meeting felt needs and demographics, coupled with statistical measurements as signs of health, promotes a mission of getting people inside a church building. When the church is busy trying to be relevant in cultural terms, it lessens time spent discerning and responding to God's mission. While the church might have begun the journey in Christendom to transform culture, the culture has actually "tamed" the church (Crouch 1004; Hauerwas and Willimon 471). This result is not surprising, given the tendency of culture to transform those within it (Crouch 77).

An attractional model of ministry does not reflect the biblical role of being a sent community for the mission of God. Hirsh believes consumerism, which is now the "driving ideology" for an attractional ministry (1409), is intrinsically pagan (1418). While the focus on being attractional has been effective for some churches, the down side is that as churches, motivated by increased numbers, strive to make ministry more attractional, missional impact has been affected (2918). Consequently, many pastors and congregants are busier than ever before in ministry, yet the church still lacks cultural impact (Hauerwas and Willimon 1598). Within the move toward attractional ministry, God yearns to send his people.

The church, by focusing on church growth through cultural relevance has neglected God's mission. The era of Christendom represented by church growth is over (Hirsch 3578), but churches continue to try to find ways to bring people into their buildings. Even when the church does reach out into the neighborhoods in ministry, the motivation is to fill the church with people. Growth-focused ministry makes the recipients of ministry, or targets, objects of striving for numerical success (Roxburgh and Boren 278) rather than recipients of God's missional love. Instead of focusing on the size of the church, missional ecclesiology focuses on God's will and mission. Missional ecclesiology calls the church to be faithful to God's call of sending the church into the world to live out the mission of his reign. When the church discovers what God wants to do and then does it, the church participates in God's kingdom work (Newbigin, *Open Secret* 18). In order to live out God's reign, missional living stresses an individual's sentness, incarnational living, and the *missio Dei*.

Missional Misunderstandings

As the church continues to struggle with issues of decline and loss of relevance, leaders strive to find answers that will stem the decline and produce much desired growth. Pastors want to know what to *do* in order to grow their churches and use ministry resources to purchase books and attend conferences promising to provide solutions. The allure of functional Christendom is so strong it has turned the term missional into a buzzword, bringing with it misunderstandings (Roxburgh and Boren 264). Because churches and leaders look for solutions that promise to bring success (defined by modernistic categories), many tout becoming missional as an answer to church decline. In some ways, pastors understand the label missional as another program that promises to

transform their churches and bring much wanted statistical growth. However, the missional movement ceases to be an ecclesiological movement and morphs into yet another church growth strategy when viewed as adding new or different programs to a church's offerings (Roxburgh and Boren 557-68). The missional movement loses its power as church and denominational leaders see it as a program rather than an ecclesiology that requires transformative change.

Viewing missional identity as a program rather than as an ethos misses the transformational power of missional ecclesiology. A church conditioned to discover felt needs and create programs meeting those needs might try to implement a missional focus in the same way (Roxburgh and Boren 555). Missional ministry defined through programs allows the church, and those within the church to continue ministry without any inner transformation (Lee). While the church may look missional externally because of programs reaching outside the church walls, the church has not made the transition to seeing mission as its core identity. Rather, mission is just something the church does.

To enter into a missional ethos requires transformation. Missional living is not something to do but something to be (McNeal xiv; Roxburgh and Boren 450). Who one is determines what one does. Trying to *do* missional acts forfeits the deep transformation missional living requires. Not understanding missional transformation causes individuals to define the term missional in cultural categories, something against which Newbigin warns (*Foolishness* 29). Defining a missional church or identity in programmatic categories can create a competition with other programs, bringing concern that focusing on being missional will displace "everything else that the church is and does" (King 33).

This view misses the point that being missional is what the church is and does and directly relates to the reign of God.

Missional ecclesiology suffers from the same cultural myopia as the gospel in the hands of functional Christendom. Alan Roxburgh and M. Boren detail the reasons why *missional* is a difficult concept to define (227-456). They give eight commonly used definitions of the missional church and why they are inadequate. The missional church, they write, is not a label that describes churches that emphasize certain types of things such as cross-cultural missions or outreach programs (269-80). Nor is missional church a label for church growth or effectiveness, being good at evangelism, or having clear vision and mission statements (281-89). Missional church, they continue, is not a label for a way to turn around ineffective and outdated church forms, a primitive or ancient way of being the church, or a new format to reach people untouched by current church formats (289-304). Most of the misunderstandings come from trying to equate missional life with functional activities. Their conclusion is that the term *missional* is difficult to define because its ecclesiology is founded on the kingdom of God, which is also difficult to define (307). They point out that definitions gain control over what is defined and the kingdom of God cannot be controlled (345). They also relate that definitions can be tricky given that culture dictates what one is looking for within a definition (332). In order to define the term missional, one joins God on a journey into the world he is creating (364).

God's Kingdom Mission

At the heart of missional ecclesiology is God's kingdom. Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:14-15). The missional church connects with

this central biblical theme and endeavors to live it out in the world. Discussions concerning the kingdom of God abound, but simply, the kingdom of God is God "putting the world to rights" and fully becoming king (Guder 132; Wright, *Simply Christian* 99-101). The mission of the church is to represent and demonstrate God's reign (Hunsberger and Van Gelder 15; Hunsberger 149-50; Tiénou and Hiebert 229). The prayer of God's kingdom is that God's will would be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Where God reigns, God's love comes.

The eschatology of missional ecclesiology reflects the focus of God's reign. Missionally speaking, eschatology is not so much about the world ending but God's future breaking into the present (Guder 187; Wright, *Simply Christian* 100; *Christian Origins* 3: 566). God's kingdom comes as individuals embody the proclamation, "Jesus is Lord of all" (Newbigin, *Open Secret* 17). God's mission is God's reign. Newbigin makes clear that the mission of the church is connected with the proclamation of God's reign:

> The mission of the church is in fact the church's obedient participation in that action of the Spirit by which the confession of Jesus as Lord becomes the authentic confession of every new people, each in its own tongue. (20)

One of the difficulties in understanding missional ecclesiology is the varied language concerning the worldview of God's kingdom. While some sources use kingdom language, others use language that focuses on following Jesus, such as "living for Christ" (Lee) and "following the way of Christ" (Halter and Smay 30). All of these phrases, however, point to being *transferred* from a worldview based on cultural and societal values into one who is a sign and foretaste of God's reign (Newbigin, *Foolishness* 92; Halter and Smay 90). Living under God's reign is inherently countercultural.

Jesus as Lord!—The Embodiment of God's Reign

The central message of Jesus was that God's kingdom had arrived and his life was a sign and foretaste of God's reign. Jesus' activities were works of God's kingdom reign (Wright, *Simply Christian* 101-02; *Christian Origins* 2: 196) and gave his hearers a foretaste of God's kingdom. Jesus was an agent and instrument of God's reign. In the manner that God sent Jesus to usher in the kingdom of God, God sends the church to be an agent, instrument, sign, and foretaste of God's reign in the world (Guder 221; Hunsberger and Van Gelder 368; Newbigin, *Foolishness* 1582). God sends the church into the world to live under God's reign, and as it does, it embodies God's love and mission becoming a sign, agent, instrument, and foretaste of God's kingdom. While the church is not the kingdom of God, it points to God's kingdom by living under his reign as it rejects cultural dualism and embodies the proclamation that Jesus is Lord (Hirsch 1180).

Missional ecclesiology lives by an alternative story. Rather than selling religious goods and services, a missional church's mission is to live out God's reign (Roxburgh and Boren 565; Dawn, Peterson, and Santucci 228). A missional posture embodies God's kingdom reign rather than the dominate culture. Theologically people may be orthodox, but instead of embodying God's kingdom, they may embody the values of the culture (Slaughter 101). Even when people profess faith in God, their posture reveals what they really "believe and feel" (Halter and Smay 39). Posture is significant because it directly relates to what individuals value and how they approach life (79). If a person's posture is to embody the values of the culture, he or she becomes an instrument and agent of the dominate culture. Embodying God's reign departs from the normative stance of

congregations operating out of functional Christendom. Missional ecclesiology invites individuals to embody an alternative story (Hirsch 610) by embodying God's reign, which will affect both the individual's life and his or her life within the community of faith. To be faithful to God's kingdom, the church has to offer a different way of life over the culture at large (Guder 152-53).

Living by God's reign results in God's mission to the world. The goal of God's mission is his love incarnated in the life of the church. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is the one doing mission (Newbigin, *Open Secret* 56) and the church's role is to join in what the Spirit is doing. As the Spirit moves within the church, the result is mission. Rather than trying to change the culture, mission serves to allow God's reign to come to the culture and the church becomes a foretaste and sign of that reign (*Foolishness* 1582-1648). Lois Y. Barrett et al. state that collaborating with God in renewing a broken world shapes a missional church:

> A missional church is a church that is shaped by participating in God's mission, which is to set things right in a broken, sinful world, to redeem it, and to restore it to what God has always intended for the world. (x)

The word shaping is notable because it recognizes the shaping and forming of the people of God around God's mission. Just as the dominate culture shapes a church's identity, so does participating in God's mission.

Missional Identity

The work of Newbigin has helped to call the church back to an identity centered in mission. His work has focused on forming a missional ecclesiology and identity. His realization that the Western church was in need of mission as much as India led him and many after him to realize the church must understand its ecclesiology in terms of God's mission to the world (*Open Secret* 2). While churches have been familiar with missions,

Newbigin uses the term not to signify the "exterior of church life" (1), but its very nature and essence. Newbigin moves mission from a church activity to the church's foundation.

The missional movement addresses functional Christendom (Guder 18-76) by recognizing that mission is not something the church does as a part of its total program, but the totality of its existence. While Christendom views mission as one of many "religious goods and services" offered to the community and the world (Roxburgh and Boren 244), missional ecclesiology rejects moving mission to the periphery of ministry. God forms the church's identity and essence by his calling and sending action (Guder 82; Roxburgh and Boren 450). Missional ecclesiology recognizes that God sends: God sent Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the faithful into the world (McNeal 21). The question central to missional ecclesiology is, "What are the purposes and directions of God for this community of believers within our church traditions?" (Roxburgh and Boren 1839). God has sent the church into its community for a reason. Focusing on God's sending purposes in mission challenges modernity's definition of success and identity by redefining the purpose of the church.

New Definitions of Success

The focus on mission requires new ways of determining effectiveness. The approach of using statistical data to measure success and health is an outgrowth of functional and modernistic approaches to life (Van Rheenen 26). Modernity views success in terms of size, quality, and growth (McNeal 6; Halter and Smay 78-79). However, statistical measurement is not how missional churches will view success (Slaughter 112, 570; Halter and Smay 79-81). Michael B. Slaughter, ironically a megachurch pastor, comments on how large numbers do not equal faithful ministry:

> The megachurch became the idolized model of success, and numbers in the pews, the measure of effectiveness. But somehow in the cycles of programming, capital campaigns, concerts, and Bible studies we forgot an important truth: curious crowds don't equal committed disciples. (192)

When churches begin living missionally, they must find other ways to determine success (McNeal 16). Reggie McNeal offers three shifts that characterize the missional church: internal to external, program to people development, and church-based to kingdom-based leadership (41, 89, 129). Because of these shifts, he argues, the church's definition of success must also shift along these same lines (16). Since missional ecclesiology replaces Christendom's focus on big ministries and big buildings, with God's missional call, statistical measurements no longer apply. Instead, one must look at whether the church is focused on God's reign and kingdom.

Jesus' Missional Example

Jesus, living under God's reign, shapes the mission of the church. Christology determines missiology, which determines ecclesiology (Halter and Smay 20; Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus* 42-43). The major characteristic of Jesus' life was his love of God and others. Jesus told his disciples they were to follow his example and love as he loved (John 13:34; 15:12). Jesus lived an alternate *story* from the dominate culture and invited people to join him (Halter and Smay 76). His love was a direct result of living under God's reign. As churches embrace a missional mind-set, they will find their values, strategies, and behaviors changing. They will find their definition of holiness transformed from keeping moralistic commands to loving as Jesus loved (Hirsch and Hirsch 436). Love becomes the foundation of holiness.

Three core components flow from Jesus' life and infuse missional ecclesiology to live under God's reign in mission to the world: (1) Jesus was incarnational; (2) Jesus

understood he was sent into the world with a purpose; and, (3) Jesus was obedient to the Father's will. These three components serve as a framework for a missional identity. Through these three components, missional ecclesiology moves toward fulfillment of the greatest commandment and the *new commandment* Jesus gave, which was to love others as he had loved (John 13:34). The goal of a missional life is that God's will, or God's mission, would be fulfilled on earth. If the church is going to be faithful to Jesus' call of love, it must be missional. Guder writes that for a missional community, "success is exhibited in the quality of Christian love experienced in the midst of its common life and ministry" (156). The goal is the love of Jesus and is to be at the heart of the church. The life of Jesus serves as a model for missional living. God sent Jesus to a particular culture at a particular time (contextualization) to live out (incarnation) God's reign (*missio Dei*). Individuals living with a missional posture understand that God sends them into the world to do God's will. God's sending is contextualization. Living in the world is incarnation. Living out God's reign is to pursue God's mission. These three components come together to create a missional identity.

Contextualization. God sending his people into the world is the heart of being missional. The essence of being missional is sentness (Halter and Smay 38), which describes the Triune God (Hirsch and Hirsch 910). Mission is not God sending people to a new geographical location but God sending the church to a specific culture (Hunsberger and Van Gelder 292). One can be missional within one's geographical location because the gospel call is to embody the values of God's kingdom rather than the dominate culture. Contextualization is vital if the church is to live out its sentness as it encounters its culture (Guder 70-71). Contextualization allows the church to be relevant within its

setting while remaining faithful to the call of God (Guder 18; Hunsberger and Van Gelder 304).

The foundation of contextualization is Jesus. God sent Jesus to a specific time and culture (Hunsberger and Van Gelder 53; Roxburgh and Boren 782). Rather than trying to incorporate techniques to grow the church, contextualization understands that a church's first responsibility is to discern what God's will is for their context. Engaging the context is allowing God to speak through Scripture within the church's cultural context (Roxburgh and Boren 878). Contextualization understands that God places the church in its location to live out God's message and mission.

Incarnation. Incarnation gives life to contextualization. In Jesus, God put on flesh and blood and came into the world (John 1:14). God putting on flesh and coming into the world is the Incarnation in which God identified with humanity (Hirsch and Hirsch 395). Living incarnationally creates space for mission to take place in the rhythm of life (Hirsch 1725) and the way in which missional ecclesiology engages the world (Hirsch and Hirsch 2263). Through incarnational living, the church deeply identifies with those to whom God sends the church (Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things* 36-38) as the life of God is imbibed into the life of the church. An incarnational approach to ministry means that instead of creating attractive places where people can come, the church finds places into which it can move as a foretaste of God's reign (Halter and Smay 95-97). Taking God's presence into God's world is at the heart of living incarnationally.

Praying and living out the prayer, "thy will be done," is the way one is shaped, incarnationally, around God's mission. As individuals live incarnationally, they become agents and instruments of God's will on earth. In effect, one must be incarnational to

pray, "[T]hy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." When one prays the Lord's Prayer, one is giving oneself over to God's reign. Praying this prayer is a dangerous thing (Guder 157-58), for one is giving up control to another. However, if one does not give up control in order to live out God's reign in tangible ways, the prayer is prayed in vain (Newbigin, *Open Secret* 91).

When Christians live incarnationally, they allow God's kingdom to be ushered into the world through their lives. As individuals allow God's will to be done in their lives, God's life within them takes on flesh and blood. Incarnation is the embodiment of God's reign. Incarnation is living so God's life shines through one's daily life (McNeal 26). It is a life of self-giving surrender and obedience to God's way.

***Missio Dei*.** Jesus' self-giving and obedient life reflects his understanding of God sending him into the world. His desire was not to glorify himself (John 8:50) but to glorify God, the one who sent him. He told the religious rulers that he was doing what his Father was showing him (John 5:19). He was only saying what he heard his Father say (John 12:49-50). His life was summed up in the prayer he prayed and taught: "Thy will be done" (Matt. 6:10). God and his mission are what formed Jesus' life.

God's mission continued through the lives of the disciples. Jesus sent the disciples to continue his mission in John 20:21; however, he began their preparation much earlier. In John 14 Jesus informed the disciples that he was going where they could not follow. After the initial shock and some reassurance on Jesus' part, Jesus continued to prepare them by telling them the work he was doing was not ending. His work would continue through them. He told them not only that they would continue his work but that they would do greater work because he was going to the Father (John 14:12).

The rest of the conversation flows from Jesus' commissioning of the disciples. Jesus gave the disciples and anyone who believes in him the mission to continue his work. He said that when they pray in his name, he will do anything (John 14:13). He told them how to respond to his love: by keeping his commandments (John 14:15). Then he taught them about the presence of God that will empower them to fulfill their mission (John 14:26). Jesus did not only send his disciples. He also instructed them that he would be with them, empowering them, as they respond to him in obedience to the work he gave them. Jesus' desire was to do God's will. His mission was the mission of God. God's mission is the mission of the believer and the church.

Missional Imagination

While discussing ecclesiology, remembering that the church consists of people is essential. McNeal comments, "The missional church is not a *what* [original emphasis] but a *who* [original emphasis]" (20). In order for the church to reflect a missional attitude, those who make up the church must reflect that attitude. Therefore, individuals having both missional attitudes and behaviors is vital. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder comment that the church is an institution both constructed by humans and created by God:

> The church has a dual nature. On the one hand, it is an institution created by God that represents the presence and authority of God's reign on earth. On the other hand, it is an organization constructed by humans for the purpose of living out a corporate life and mission. (285)

Since the church is composed of people, the collective attitude, or posture, of the people will drive the posture of the church.

A missional posture will touch both imagination and spirituality. In discussing Saul (later Paul) and his transformation, Roxburgh and Boren write, "Information and

definitions were not the issue; what Saul needed was a radical transformation of his imagination—of the way in which he saw the world" (232). Roxburgh and Boren define imagination as "how one sees the world" (227). One might argue that "how one sees the world" is an adequate description of one's culture or one's worldview. Roxburgh and Boren call for transformation so individuals might see the world and themselves through a missional imagination or worldview (140). Hirsch describes something similar, which he calls "Apostolic Genius," but he distinguishes it from Roxburgh and Boren's missional imagination (Hirsch 3426). Apostolic Genius is a "built-in life force and guiding mechanism of God's people" (122) but is dormant and needs to be unleashed (165). Both the unleashing of Apostolic Genius and then change of missional imagination requires the transformation of the individual.

Talking about making shifts in culture and worldview is easier than accomplishing it. Analyzing the culture is much easier than actually changing it (Crouch 665). Culture has more effect on thinking than thinking has on culture. The church has tried to transform culture through analysis and finds itself "tamed" by culture instead (Hauerwas and Willimon 471). Andy Crouch points out that thinking does not evolve into behaving:

> The language of worldview tends to imply, to paraphrase the Catholic writer Richard Rohr, that we can think ourselves into new ways of behaving. But that is not the way culture works. Culture helps us behave ourselves into new ways of thinking. (694)

In order to think missionally, individuals must acquire missional behaviors birthed from a transformed life. If new ways of acting cause changes in the accepted culture, then the best approach to change culture is to introduce desired behaviors.

Missional Spirituality

Being missional is being faithful to God's mission in everyday life. While individuals might be prone to look for God in the extraordinary (Frost 1), missional spirituality points to God in ordinary, daily events (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 94; Roxburgh and Boren 544). By focusing on the extraordinary, individuals miss how God leads and directs them in everyday circumstances (van Kaam, *Dynamics of Spiritual Direction* 51). In seeing God in ordinary living, missional ecclesiology connects with a deep spiritual reality. Adrian van Kaam writes, "In them [day-to-day circumstances] reside the answers we seek when we do not get in the way of the Spirit and when we do not push against the pace of grace, thereby losing our peace" (51). As people live each day receptively, everyday events serve to shape them. Connecting God's directives to daily life is something that both the proponents of missional ecclesiology and masters of the spiritual life have done. For those such as Roxburgh and Boren this connection is being faithful by allowing God to lead into the neighborhoods of daily life (544). For van Kaam the connection between God's directives and daily life is allowing God to shape and form individuals through everyday events. The commonality of both views is being receptive to God in one's life or in praying the prayer, "Thy will be done." The prayer, "Thy will be done," is the goal and the essence of a missional spirituality.

Transformational Nature

Doing missional deeds and being missional are different postures. Being missional is not adding a new program or worship service to an existing church (Roxburgh and Boren 554) or even participating in missional activity. In order for a church, or individual, to move to a missional posture, deep transformation is needed

(Newbigin, *Foolishness* 83). God says, through Isaiah, that human ways are not like God's ways (Isa. 55:8). In order to live according to God's way, individuals must intentionally seek God. Missional transformation affects the spiritual life and the mind, creating a "paradigm shift" (Newbigin, *Foolishness* 830) in which one's thoughts and ways are aligned with God's. One must align the way one looks at oneself, the world, and one's purpose in the world with the *missio Dei.* A missional identity completely transforms one's life (Hirsch and Hirsch 608; McNeal 10). This transformation is the kingdom of God breaking into the present (Roxburgh and Boren 320). Believing one can acquire a missional identity without addressing existing foundations is a source of misunderstandings. On the contrary, a missional identity must be the foundation for everything. One does not *do* missional acts; one acts out of a missional identity. In moving toward a missional identity, one must grapple with one's core identity.

Genesis of the False Self

At the heart of faith is trust. The Genesis account of creation gives insight into human identity, life, and relationship to God (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 27; Finley 240). The account tells of broken trust as Adam and Eve decide they could not trust God concerning the goodness of their lives (Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines* 91). They saw the fruit was inviting and ate. Adam and Eve made the choice to trust in their own abilities rather than to trust God. Instead of living in God's reality, they chose to live in their own unreality. The false self, or sin, was born through humanity's choice to disobey God (Finley 256). The choice of trust is one every individual must make and is the choice between the false self and the true self (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 23). By trusting

God, individuals are able to become who they truly are (Haase 1503). In choosing not to trust God, humanity chooses death (Finley 240) and denies its true self.

Adam and Eve denied their true selves by choosing to be *like God* rather than allowing God to be God. Their choice placed them in unreality. Evelyn Underhill writes, "It is notorious that the operations of the average human consciousness unite the self, not with things as they really are, but with images, notions, aspects of things" (107). Instead of becoming who they were created to be, united with God in love and trust, they became who they were not, separated from God by disobedience and distrust. Cain's need to make for himself a city is an indication that the center of his being moved from God to an external structure he created (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 28). Life lived separated from God is life lived in unreality where images and aspirations take God's place. It is where the false self leads individuals to become who they were not created to be. Merton says unreality immerses individuals when they cling to their external consciousness and calls this unreality the root of all sin (*Inner Experience* 91). He also comments that clinging to unreality is the greatest disaster (*Thoughts in Solitude* 3). God has created individuals not for unreality but to relate to him in trust.

Even though God created people to participate in his life and to be one with him, the reality of sin causes them to cling to their false selves of distrust. The false self is the result of the Fall and is now humanity's natural identity. Merton writes, "To say I was born in sin is to say I came into the world with a false self" (qtd. in Finley 284). The true self, in contrast, is the individual's identity in Christ. It is the way of trust, aligning oneself with God and God's purposes, while experiencing the relationship God intended (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 27). The true self lives in truth and trust. The false self

lives in a self-referenced world focusing on its own desires and agendas (44-45). The false self demands complete obedience while pulling individuals further into death and away from their true selves (Finley 270). Dr. van Kaam refers to the false self as the pride-form, connecting the false self to the deadly sin of pride when he writes, "The autarchic pride-form dominates and deforms their life" (*Fundamental Formation* 54). The false self deforms as it dominates. The result of allowing the false self, or pride-form, to dominate is an inability to connect and center oneself in God and his purposes.

Susan Muto and van Kaam have given a gift to the church with their work in formative spirituality, which synthesizes anthropology, science, and theology of formation into a new discipline (*Essential Elements* 18). While this project does not plumb the depths of formative spirituality, it is helpful when dealing with transformational and incarnational issues. Dr. van Kaam and Muto write that God gifts each person with a Christ-form, but this form is in conflict with the pride-form (19-20). This conflict is reminiscent of the struggle of Adam and Eve. In a Wesleyan understanding, individuals receive the Christ-form, an individual's identity in Christ, at the point of salvation. As individuals align their lives to the Christ-form, God's unique communal call for their lives unfolds (96). The life and will of God flows through them, and they find peace with God. Integrating God's unique communal call into one's daily life is incarnational living. Allowing God's will to be done in one's life forms one in the life of Christ, bringing him or her into the life of the kingdom of God (Thrall et al. 353). God's will is the love of God and the love of others.

Living in unreality clouds who God created individuals to be. Forgetfulness of who one is becomes the driving force behind the quest to center one's identity in external

images and projects (Haase 181). The quest for identity forms one in functional activities and what one does becomes the only source for one's identity (501). One seeks verification of worth and sense of validation, believing that by doing more the unreality of the false self can be clothed with reality (Finley 364). In the end, one is always searching but never finding as one clings to the false self. The rock band U2 strikes a chord with the false self in their song *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For* (Bono). The only way to connect to what is true about oneself is in the journey to the true self. Becoming attentive to the divine is the beginning of coming home to one's true self (Haase 254).

Confronting the False Self

One must confront the false self's grasp of one's identity because the true self is what connects with God's will. The essence of missional identity and God's kingdom life is the same: identifying and living God's will (Roxburgh and Boren 696-712). When one is faithful to God's will, one is living in true reality rather than the unreality of the false self. Underhill defines mysticism as living in reality (87). Mysticism recognizes that God within one's life is ultimately a mystery and reality.

At the heart of a missional life is incarnation. In John 14:10, Jesus said the words he spoke were not his; rather, "it is the Father living in me, this is his work." Just as Jesus allowed the life of the Father to flow through him, individuals must allow the life of God to flow through them. William H. Shannon explains why dualistic language is problematic in describing the relation among the true self, false self, and individual:

> Almost inevitably this means that I have given an impression that I do not intend to convey: namely (in this instance, for example), the notion that when I talk about the "true self" and the "false self" there is somehow a

> third party who *has* [original emphasis] these "two" selves and in whom "they" battle to see who wins out. (126)

Shannon continues to show that dualistic language can never explain the reality of the true self. Instead, one must, in an apophatic way, just know that the true self is (127). Reason cannot lead one to the true self. Only "total and radical dependence on God" can allow one to experience the true self, which is also an experience of God (127). One discovers God in finding his or her true self. Jesus, through his life and death, has opened the way to put to death the false self, so one can crossover to the true self (127). Once individuals enter into the reality of the true self, they, like Jesus, can discover God's mission flowing through them.

Source of Service

The source of service to others is God's will. Wesley argues that one can only do "good works" after justification. The reason he gives is that "no works are good which are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done" (Wesley, Outler, and Heitzenrater 1771-85). If one is going to do ministry or work for the sake of others, those works must align with God's will. If an individual's actions are not as God has willed them, then, according to Wesley, those actions are not truly good. When individuals are receptive to God's will, God's unique communal call unfolds in their lives (van Kaam and Muto 96-100). As God's call unfolds in individuals' lives, they become what God wills. Aligning oneself with God's will is becoming who one is. Rather than focusing on God's will being *done,* perhaps a better focus is that God's will would be (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 157). When individuals pray that God's will be done, they are actually praying that they might become "an incarnation of God's will in [their] response" (156). Being aligned with God's will relates with what an Eastern Orthodox priest said about

those who reach *theosis*, or union with God: "[W]hatever they wish is what God wishes, and it is given. There is little separation between the individual ego and God, between the will of the perfected, Christified individual and the will of God" (Markides 245). As individuals align with their true selves, they are able to be God's will, which is love (Leloup 131).

Spiritual Formation

Because sin has caused humanity to gravitate toward the false self, away from God and God's love, spiritual formation is critical for living incarnationally. Spiritual formation through classic disciplines enables individuals to bring their lives into cooperation with God's order (Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines* 68). The disciplines connect Christians to Jesus at emotional, mental, and spiritual levels. In other words, the disciplines foster trust that Jesus can lead and provide (91). Jesus painted stories and pictures of the kingdom of God to touch the imagination so his followers might get a sense of what the kingdom was like and enter into it. The kingdom of God has not captured or formed individuals until they are able to trust Jesus enough to love as he loved.

Spiritual Disciplines

Throughout history, the church has stressed practices that form Christians in the way of God and character of Jesus. For centuries, faithful men and women have been on a quest to discover God, and some have left witness to their quest and their discoveries (T. Jones 15-17). These faithful witnesses have left behind practices that helped formed them in the ways of God. Spiritual formation is the process of allowing God to form one's life into the image of Christ (Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey* 25). Without

spiritual disciplines, rather than being formed in Christlikeness, individuals tend to follow their own definitions, categories, and models (Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines* 62-64). Spiritual formation forms the individual in Christ. Spiritual formation is a divine cooperation reflecting "our decisions, commitments, disciplines and actions … [but is also an] activity initiated by God and completed by God in which we have been generously embraced for the sake of the world" (*NRSV Spiritual Formation Bible* xii). Spiritual formation is important because missional identity is a journey (Roxburgh and Boren 364). Willingness to be formed in Christ is the only option for faithfulness.

Formation in Christ requires Christians to recognize that sin has deformed and marred who God created them to be. In order for missional transformation to take place, one must connect deeply to God through spiritual disciplines (Hirsch 536). Missional transformation takes more than reading a book or listening to sermons or teachings; hearts must be transformed (Halter and Smay 46). Transformation does not happen by accident but must be intentional and cultivated (Guder 149-50). If individuals are going to be missional, cultivation of one's spiritual life is critical because the heart of God births missional activity (Newbigin, *Open Secret* 56). As Christians grow in relationship with and receptiveness to God, they are able to connect with God's missional nature (Demarest, *Soul Guide* 28). The nurture of missional transformation takes place when individuals are intentional about spiritual growth through specific practices.

Challenging the False Self

Spiritual disciplines offer a framework that challenges a Christian's false identity by peeling off the layers of the false self and undergirding the journey toward his or her identity in Christ. The power of the disciplines is in receptively placing oneself before

God in order to put to death the false self and embrace the true self (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 168). Spiritual formation is vital because through the disciplines control is taken from the false self as individuals allow God to direct them toward their true selves. In connecting with the true self, individuals are able to connect with God's purposes. Muto and van Kaam write, "The pride-form seeks only self-aggrandizement whereas appraisal in its truest form leads to self-giving service" (*Essential Elements of Formation* 157). They point out that the Holy Spirit "enables us to liberate ourselves" from false identities and find the Christians' truest form (van Kaam and Muto 35). In doing so, individuals are able to live in service to others.

Spiritual practices enable individuals to connect deeply with God, thus discovering the *missio Dei*. Missional proponents understand the importance of these practices (Guder 186; Slaughter 574; Hirsch 535; Roxburgh and Romanuk 153). Living out a missional identity is not automatic; it must be nurtured. Those wanting a missional identity must have a desire to rise above American cultural Christianity, which has left the church anemic by focusing on a repent-receive version of the gospel that encourages sin management (Thrall et al. 98). Missional spirituality requires rejection of faith based on sin management in favor of faith that moves individuals into the kingdom of God. Becoming an agent, instrument, sign, and foretaste is an intentional act (112). Bill Thrall et. al. believe that the American church must move to an "integrated and organic approach of spiritual formation" (238). If Christians are going to be faithful to the calling and sending of God (for the calling is also the sending), they must cultivate the life of God within them. Intentional practices of transformation must be central for such a movement.

Disciplines as Framework of Spiritual Formation

Historic practices are the framework of one's spiritual life. The disciplines faithful Christians have practiced through the ages form the life of the one who practices them. God has much to offer, but the business of living often cuts off the gifts God wants to give (Muto 31). However, many are satisfied without God's gifts. One of Brother Lawrence's regrets was that in his day so many Christians were satisfied with a little bit of God. He says that God wants to give "infinite treasure" but individuals are content with "a little sensible devotion." Perhaps the Christians who only want a little devotion do not even realize what they are missing. Father Maximos comments that before people experience God they see the darkness not only as normal but also as beautiful (Markides 272). By not experiencing God, individuals do not realize how little of God they have and are convinced their state is normal.

Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit leads into all truth (John 16:13). Drs. van Kaam and Muto maintain the Holy Spirit is the best spiritual director and self-direction is most desirable of all the forms of spiritual direction (van Kaam, *Dynamics of Spiritual Direction* 26; Muto and van Kaam, *Epiphany Manual* 29). Missional spirituality requires practices that enable individuals to follow God's direction through the leading of the Spirit (Guder 186) so their lives and actions align with God's spirit. McNeal comments that the reason why so many individuals are beginning to say and teach the same things regarding missional issues is because they are working from the same Source (36). While McNeal was making a passing comment, the truth embedded in his reasoning is why spiritual formation is necessary. When people are led by the Spirit, God directs them in his mission and aligns individuals with one another. When people operate from

humanistic resources and methods, they forfeit God's direction. Therefore, followers of Christ must not only understand spiritual practices but also practice them to open up avenues for the Spirit.

Practices that create receptiveness to God's will are central to one's spiritual growth and essential in living a missional life. The disciplines are not an option but the only way to live as Jesus lived (Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines* 26), and all the devotional masters have affirmed their necessity (Foster 1). Even so, the church has struggled with where the disciplines fit into an individual's life since God's salvation is by grace. Wesley addresses the role of the disciplines in his sermon "The Means of Grace" (Wesley, Outler, and Heitzenrater 2391). Wesley writes that God works through the disciplines as long as individuals practiced them in a manner that focuses on God, allowing God to renew the individual in righteousness and holiness (2630). Wesley understood that spiritual disciplines do not hold any power in and of themselves but were only effective when individuals approached them as a *means* for God's gifts to flow into their lives. Others also view the disciplines as an avenue or *means* for God's grace to be received (Foster 6; Collins, *Soul Care* 150; Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey* 76; Demarest, *Satisfy Your Soul* 33). While some would neglect the disciplines because salvation is by grace through faith, devotional masters, such as Wesley, continue to argue that they are central to a life of holiness (Wesley, Outler, and Heitzenrater 2417). The role the disciplines play is in creating receptiveness before God.

Wesley understood that individuals must practice the disciplines in the right manner. Being an expert in the techniques of spiritual disciples is not the same as practicing them (Foster 3). The temptation to focus on technique is a form of control,

looking for a specific outcome (Laird 62). Some look to receive blessings or favors. The wrong goal is to practice spiritual disciplines in order to control or manipulate God around one's agenda and desires.

Spiritual disciplines create space where individuals can become receptive to God. Like a spiral, as individuals become receptive and respond through obedience, they become more receptive. Deepening receptiveness could be a quick process because essentially life in Christ is a gift (Foster 5; Teresa of Avila 1048), but usually transformation is gradual (Haase 949). God's unwillingness does not impede the progress; humanity's distrust of God and unwillingness to relinquish control does.

The Journey Back to Eden

While spiritual practices are paramount, simply adding them to one's life does not necessarily mean one will become missional or align oneself with God. One can do the right things but in the wrong ways (Wesley, Outler, and Heitzenrater 2403; Foster 3). If one practices spiritual disciples yet remains in control of one's life, the desired effect is lost. The power of spiritual practices is in leading one toward abandonment to God. As Jean-Pierre de Caussade stresses, holiness consists of being obedient to God's will (24). One can be faithful in spiritual disciplines yet never give oneself over to God and God's mission. Perhaps a better term to describe the way in which one should approach spiritual practices would be "spiritual manners" (Sardello 4). The term *spiritual manners* implies that it is not the technique, but the manner which is key. The disciplines, if practiced in humility, enable one to enter and be the prayer, "Thy will be done."

One enters the disciplines in humility by trusting God. Trust was lost when sin entered into the world. If individuals are going to identify with the true self, they must

once again trust God. The issue of trust is important in faith development (Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey* 93-94). Individuals can faithfully practice all the spiritual disciplines and remain untransformed if they do not come in an attitude of trust. If individuals do not trust God, the distrust does not just affect their disciplines but all of their lives. They will discover they are not able to be faithful to God's call, nor will they be faithful to incarnational living.

Becoming receptive to God in one's daily life is the most valuable outcome of practicing the disciplines. Wesley says that the means of grace are not what bring spiritual growth (Wesley, Outler, and Heitzenrater 2623). The belief that if Christians simply do the right discipline, then they will grow spiritually is not the case. Ultimately, any growth in the spiritual life is a gift from God. God is the source of transformation, not the practices. The practices serve to create receptivity to the work of God in one's life.

Lack of Practice

The void of formative practices within contemporary American Christianity is troubling. The lack of such practices results in Christians who are not necessarily disciples. Dallas Willard calls this void "the Great Omission" or the ability to be a Christian forever without ever becoming a disciple (*Great Omission* 134). Willard is not the only one who is concerned about this situation. The Theological and Cultural Thinkers group consists of individuals, Willard among them, who believe the lack of spiritual practices creates an inability to live a kingdom life (Thrall et al. 91). Living a life characterized by God's kingdom is dependent on spiritual disciplines. Living in God's kingdom is being faithful to one's true self. Spiritual disciplines enable individuals to

cooperate with God in combating the false self. As Christians' lives become more receptive to God, their true lives begin to unfold.

Missional spirituality cultivates God's presence in the life of Christians through spiritual disciplines. It recognizes that faithfulness is living incarnationally by allowing God's gifts and graces to flow unfettered. Living in open receptivity to God is one mark of a mature spiritual life (Demarest, *Satisfy Your Soul* 58). To live missionally means one will connect with the deepest part of oneself, thus discovering God's leading and his will. In order to accomplish the connection between the self and God, individuals must incorporate practices that foster receptivity and openness to God.

Missional proponents state that spiritual formation is a vital component of living a missional life. Living missionally is impossible without this core component connecting individuals to God's mission, yet an area missing from the discussion is the role silence and solitude play in living a missional life. The practices of prayer, reflective reading, fasting, and other spiritual practices are essential because they form the framework of spiritual formation. Silence and solitude, however, being foundational, touch people at the core of their being.

Universal Call of Silence and Solitude

Silence and solitude have been central throughout history. While the Bible does not specifically address the need and practice of silence and solitude, it does so through example (Shannon 12). The biblical witness documents Moses in the desert for forty years before hearing the call of God. Paul spent three years in Arabia (Gal. 1:17-18). Elijah found that God's voice came in the sound of "sheer silence" on a lonely mountain (2 Kings 19:12). Even Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness before beginning his

public ministry (Luke 4:1-2, Matt. 4:1-2, Mark 1:12-13). Many followed Antony into the desert after Constantine's edict making Christianity an official religion and discovered that within the silence and solitude of the desert they were able to discern God's ways (Belisle 16-17). Perhaps the clearest call to silence is God's own in Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God."

The relationship between silence and solitude is so strong that at times the two are difficult to separate. While the practices of silence and solitude are closely related, they do differ. Solitude is drawing away from others to be present to Christ. It is allowing the self to become detached, not just from other people but from media and anything else that might be distracting. Solitude strips away everything that defines oneself and allows the individual to discover who he or she is in God. St. Anthony ran to solitude to escape the compulsions of his culture so to embrace God and others (Nouwen 15). The practice of solitude is not simply a time to get away or a place of rest. Solitude is a place of transformation (Kidd 89; Nouwen 10). In solitude, an individual encounters his or her true self and all that one has allowed to clutter the soul.

Silence is the ancient spiritual practice of placing oneself before God in order to listen to God's directions. Silence recognizes that words can only communicate a part of reality. Words cannot communicate the deeper reality within the individual; only silence can. While solitude focuses on detachment from cultural compulsions, silence focuses on the need to be and seek that which is within each individual. Nouwen writes, "Silence is solitude practiced in action" (36). Perhaps the sense of detachment in both silence and solitude is what creates a strong relationship between the two practices.

Silence connects to a reality beyond words and is difficult to describe with words. Words describe what is known, but one must go beyond them to silence (Nouwen and Roderick 30). Because silence goes beyond words, example and witness are the best teachers (Shannon 12). One must enter and listen because silence is always present and is not something one creates by removing the noise and not talking (Leloup 20; Foster and Griffin 156). One discovers no need for words as one enters into the reality of silence. One enters into the mystery of silence in the environment of solitude.

Encountering the Mystery

Those who have practiced silence and solitude discover that the practices foster an encounter with the mystery that is present within them. Elaine MacInnes reports on the Prison Phoenix Trust, which uses meditation to help release the sacred from within prisoners. One prisoner in the program wrote about the impact solitude and silence had:

> I just want you to know that after only four weeks of meditating half an hour in the morning and at night, the pain is not so bad, and for the first time in my life, I can see a tiny spark of something within myself that I can like. (1072)

Through contemplative practices the prisoner discovered another reality, a *something* that was beyond description or explanation. While orthodox Christianity struggles to understand and elucidate the reality, silence and solitude show that another presence is within each individual (Laird 121). Perhaps Jesus was alluding to another presence when he said that the "kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Humanity, under the leadership of the false self, covers this presence through layers of sin, rebellion, and disobedience. The prisoner's discovery connects with others throughout the ages who have discovered that silence removes the obstacles to the presence (Laird 108).

Solitude and silence provide a place where one meets God. In solitude and silence, one is not alone; rather, one discovers a presence that comes from the depths of the silence (Sardello xiii; Belisle 16). Perhaps connecting with this other presence is why all the major religions point to silence and solitude as foundational spiritual practices (LeClaire 222). Spiritual masters, no matter whether from the East or the West, teach that silence is a condition of "being and remaining present to the transcendence" (Muto 54) or source (Sardello 1; LeClaire 415; Prochnik 378). Even though some traditions only use silence as a starting ground for other practices, silence is indeed the goal (Merton, *Inner Experience* 154; Sardello 9). Through silence, God becomes the center of one's identity.

Contemplation changes individuals in ways no other discipline can. Silence strips away surface living and replaces it with "true metanoia" (Sardello xvii, 19). As believers journey in ways of contemplation, individuals notice they are becoming more aligned with God's will of love (Underhill 423). Silence and solitude encounter one at the core of the controlling false self (Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey* 140). As Christians continue to practice silence and solitude, they discover God's kingdom and way being released within them (*Deeper Journey* 149). Because God is already within the individual, transformation through silence is not another project of the false self where one works to get God into his or her inner life (143). God is already within one's life (Haase 271; Laird 187). Real transformation takes place almost passively as through silence the soul receptively receives the transformation of God.

Observing silence and solitude brings interior empowerment. Father Maximous, an Eastern Orthodox priest, believes that in the silence and solitude of the monastic life he waits for "the power from on high" and then when the call comes, even when the call

is not part of his personal deepest longing, he is prepared to make a difference (Markides 692). Maximous compares silence and solitude to Jesus telling the disciples to wait in the upper room until the Holy Spirit came (692). Mother Teresa required novices to spend their first year in complete contemplation and solitude in order for the interior to power the exterior (75). David Jacobus Bosch observes the many times churches and missionary agencies rush to get missionaries in the field soon after they sense God's call (43). He wonders if missionaries would benefit from time used for psychological or missionary formation (43; Slaughter 661). The source of one's activities needs to be God's will. Contemplative practices move one away from the false self's attempt to dominate and control making God the source of transformation, not self. Instead of adding exterior practices onto one's life, giving the façade of transformation, transformation comes from within the individual and is real.

Silence as a Combatant to the False Self

The Christians' ongoing battle is against the false self. The false self resists one's journey toward the true self (Laird 527; Barton 518). Cultural pulsations drive individuals toward the false self's agenda of autonomy and control (Haase 2066). These pulsations affect the spiritual life by immersing spiritual practices in control and functionalism, perhaps even making them deformative (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 152; Dawn, Peterson and Santucci 77; Sardello 27; Leloup 65). The false self will try to circumvent right practices by doing them the wrong way.

Culture creates a noisy environment where people are unable to listen to the voice of the true self. For this reason, silence is uncomfortable (Sardello 7). Even when observing silence, people discover that seemingly ubiquitous inner noise (48, 60). Within

the flurry of activity, noisy lives are mistaken for rich lives (LeClaire 109). Culture has become noisy; noise is used to block out other unwanted noise or perhaps what one does not want to face (Prochnik 3856; Nouwen 17-18). Silence and solitude are powerful because one begins to hear that which one does not want to know (Nouwen 17-18), yet in the silence, one hears the voice of the true self.

The false self's attempt to remain in control pulls the individual away from contemplative practices. The soul tends to gravitate toward the false self's controlling nature (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 24), thus forgetting its connection with God (Sardello 20). Adam and Eve gave into the false self in the creation narrative because they wanted to be "like God" (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 27). To be *like God* is to be in control. Those who practice silence discover that it somehow hits at the core of being in control by facilitating letting go (Laird 80; LeClaire 608).

Anne D. LeClaire discovered the meaning of letting go when she decided to embrace the practice of silence. A difficult realization was that the world continued even when she was not actively involved in it (595). In her practice, she discovered that "[t]o be speechless is to relinquish control, to know that there is nothing we can do, including expressing empathy in the face of another's distress. At heart, silence is an exercise in surrender" (608). Learning that one can stop controlling everything is Sabbath. Letting go is an acknowledgment that one was never in control.

Toward a Missional Identity

A contemplative life leads one to a missional identity. The journey toward missional identity is a journey toward the true self and God's mission of selfless love (Haase 338). God displayed his love through the life of Jesus who selflessly gave himself

for humanity (Rom. 5:8; Phil. 2:5-8). To look at Jesus is to see God's love. Missional identity incarnates God's selfless love in mission to the world; however, to break free of the false self, which is unable to love selflessly (Barton 168), one must enter into silence. Jean-Yves Leloup writes, "Only the silent heart can love truly not only God in contemplation but also others as they are, not as we would have them" (21). St. Isaac the Syrian believed one attained purity of heart when one could see all as good and no one as impure (Leloup 19). Conversely, those who do not pursue God in purity of heart see only what their heart, controlled by the false self, allows (Hirsch and Hirsch 637). Loving others as they are only comes as individuals embrace their true selves. Spiritual masters have connected the practice of silence and solitude to attentiveness of God that enables individuals to discover their true selves (Finley 201; Underhill 492). Without silence individuals live from the false self where even their best intentions and practices are self-referenced (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 74). In silence, they not only learn how to love God but also others, which is the essence of God's mission.

The belief that contemplation creates a solitary and passive faith is misguided. The false self uses such misconceptions to hinder practices that threaten to break its control. Contemplative practices do not make one "a dead branch," but "alive" (Leloup 4). Underhill argues that a contemplative life leads to an active and more faithful life (1283). Contemplatives such as St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila were active in reform and kingdom work at the height of their contemplation. One discovery of contemplative practices is that much activity is born of the will and desires of the individual instead of God's will (Barton 925). Performing missional acts without missional ethos is possible and in the end is nothing more than activism. For the

contemplative, the goal is simply the will of God, regardless of outcome (Merton, *Inner Experience* 13). This goal makes sense considering contemplation aligns individuals so the source of their works is God's will.

Praying, "Thy Will Be Done"

In order to pray the kingdom prayer, one must seek detachment. Detachment is an essential principle for returning to one's deepest center (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 145) and breaking through the "mind games" of the false self (Laird 593). Masters of the spiritual life, such as St. Teresa of Avila, teach that attachment to worldly items keeps believers from union with God (277). While the missional life does not necessarily equate with the mystical union, Teresa, among others, advocate, both missional identity and mystical union contain a sense of detachment which is needed in order to seek God's will for one's life. St. Teresa writes that the core of the spiritual life is bringing the will "into conformity with the will of God" (718). One with a missional identity has the same goal which is reflected in the prayer, "Thy will be done."

Incarnation of the prayer, "Thy will be done," requires one to let go of all the attachments of the false self. Detachment is letting go in order to have a deeper attachment to God and others (Foster 15). The ability to rest in the will of God and to let go of all that is not God, including results, is a mark of the contemplative (Merton, *Inner Experience* 31) and surrendered life. Jesus' life reflected surrender to the service of God and is the model for those who wish to follow him (Haase 2207). Going even further is yearning not just to do the will of God but to be the will of God (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 157). Allowing God's will to be the core of one's being is true incarnation.

Detachment opens the door to humility. Humility comes because one is finally able to let go of one's false realities. Humility is truth (Leloup 40; Funk 85). Viewing oneself in truth and allowing God to be God on God's terms is the mark of humility (Mulholland, *Deeper Journey* 158). In order to see through the false self's clever manipulation and the mind games it employs, detachment is necessary (Laird 593). Contemplation strips away what is unreal, so one can embrace reality.

Through silence, one confronts the unreality of the false self and embraces the reality of the true self. Fearing what they might find, most people never enter into silence. George Prochnik perceptively comments on why so many individuals avoid silence:

> Silence is for bumping into yourself. That's why monks pursuit it. And that's also why people can't get into a car without turning the radio on, or walk into a room without switching on a television. They seek to avoid that confrontation. (334)

As one grows in the practice of silence, one discovers dissatisfaction with the world of the false self (Underhill 499). A holy dissatisfaction with the false self leads one in looking for the transcendent. Nothing is more humbling as discovering transformation through doing nothing and learning the truth. All is a gift from God.

Struggling to Listen

The issue with which Christians must struggle, as missional Christians, is a spiritual one. Because the false self is in control, people really do not want to hear from God or know what is real (Underhill 107-63). The false self battles against a life centered in mystery (Haase 1196). The false self yearns to be in control and the noise in individuals' minds and world is their lives running away from connecting with the deepest part of who they are—their true selves, the very spark of God's presence (519). However, until those of the community of faith connect with this spark and find their true

selves, Christians and churches will have difficulty in determining God's mission from functional activities (Hauerwas and Willimon 1202). If Christians do not connect to the source of mission, no spiritual practice will move them forward toward God's mission.

Research Design

The inability or unwillingness to center oneself in contemplative practices results in ignorance of God's will and loss of missional identity. Until Christians cultivate a posture of listening to the will of God and obedience to it, the church will continue with good ideas, but not necessarily God's will.

This study measured the impact of silence, solitude, and reflective reading in the lives of congregants of the North Judson United Methodist Church. Since the sample was a preexisting group and self-selected rather than randomized, the research utilized a quasi-experimental, nonequivalent group, mixed-methods research design. One of the characteristics of a quasi-experimental design is the use of intact groups (Creswell 313), and can include nonrandom assignment within groups ("Nonequivalent Groups Design"). By using both an experimental group (North Judson) and a control group (Knox), the design is an improvement over simply using the experimental group from North Judson (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 283). The study also used a pre- and posttest design approach giving pretests and posttests to both groups but conducting the experimental treatment with only one group (Creswell 313-14).

The study utilized a mixed-methods, embedded design approach by collecting quantitative data and using qualitative data to find themes (Creswell 558-60). The study used quantitative questionnaires to measure the effect the intervention of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on the missional identity of individuals. One

qualitative question gave insight into attitudinal changes of the experimental group participants. The pretest and posttest surveys collected both the quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data served to find themes concerning individuals' thoughts and attitudes about silence and solitude before and after the intervention.

Summary

The call of God is to incarnate love. God's mission, displayed in the life of Jesus, is love. Jesus' life was an example of one whose desire was to do the mission of God. The main characteristic of a disciple of Jesus is to love as Jesus loved and fulfill God's mission. The problem is that Christians have forfeited God's mission in order to be the seller of religious goods and services (Hauerwas and Willimon 1202). The result of a Christendom focus has been that those outside the church do not view Christians as loving.

The values and love Jesus displayed in his life, sadly, are different from the values in the lives of his followers. People see Jesus as loving and compassionate but the church as judgmental and harsh. One can see a difference between the beliefs and values Christians claim and live. Jesus modeled what life in the kingdom of God looks like by living an incarnational life. Jesus' life reflected the values and character of God's kingdom. A missional identity desires to incarnate these same values by living the prayer that was at the heart of Jesus' life: "Thy will be done."

At the core of a missional identity is a yearning to fulfill God's purposes. Praying, "thy will be done," in the Lord's prayer is a cry for God's kingdom. Praying that God's will be done is an act of relinquishing control and being receptive to the way and will of God in one's life. God's will being done is at the heart of the kingdom of God and a key

component of incarnational living. When individuals are receptive to God's will, God's kingdom is realized incarnationally through their lives.

In order to incarnate God's kingdom values, one must connect deeply to God in receptivity which comes through daily practicing disciplines that center one in God's presence. The contemplative practices of silence and solitude center individuals in God's presence and must be central in one's daily practices. Through these practices, Christians begin to sense God's presence within them and move toward embodying the values of God's kingdom.

The disconnection between beliefs and actions is related to the inability, or unwillingness, to observe the core practices of silence and solitude. By cultivating the silence needed to listen to God's voice within their lives, Christians can know the will of God. Trying to embrace missional identity in other ways may lead to functional activities birthed from the false self. If Christians are going to embrace a missional identity, then silence and solitude can be core practices, centering individuals in receptivity to God's will.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

The problem of the church embodying the love of Jesus is the unwillingness of individuals to practice daily habits that enable them to live missionally. Such unwillingness causes a disconnect between one's beliefs and behavior.

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effect that the contemplative practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist Church congregants who volunteered to participate in a twelve-week spiritual formation process. Through the reflective readings, individuals gained a sense of missional vision and values. By practicing silence and solitude, they were able to begin living out God's mission.

Research Questions

Three questions guided the research. I asked identical questions before and after the intervention of the experimental group. I asked a third question to determine the change in missional identity and determined the control baseline by comparing the pre- and posttest of the control group.

Research Question #1

What was the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist congregants based on the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale prior to the introduction of the spiritual formation process?

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale questionnaire measured the individuals' sense of God's presence and the integration of their faith in daily life before the spiritual

formation process. This questionnaire gave a baseline for later comparison with the same questionnaire administered as a posttest.

Research Question #2

What was the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist congregants based on the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale after participating in the spiritual formation process?

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale questionnaire measured the individuals' sense of God's presence and the integration of their faith in daily life after the spiritual formation process.

Research Question #3

How did the spiritual formation process affect the participants' missional identity?

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale along with the Weekly Practice Activity survey measured the influence the spiritual formation process had on the participants. The study compared the results from the experimental group and control group to determine the change in missional identity.

Population and Participants

The population included the congregants of North Judson United Methodist Church and Knox United Methodist Church in Starke County, Indiana, who attended worship services on Sunday 12 September 2010, 19 September 2010, and 26 September 2010.

The sample was a self-selected group of thirty-four individuals from North Judson United Methodist Church. The control group was a self-selected sample of twenty individuals from Knox United Methodist Church.

Design of the Study

Missional identity is the amenability to allow God's will to be fulfilled in one's daily life. In order for missional identity to be formed, an individual must be aware of God's presence and able to listen to discern God's ways. This project measured the effect silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on an individual's missional identity. First, over three Sundays in September, I gave invitations of participation to both North Judson and Knox United Methodist Churches. Second, a self-selected group from North Judson served as the experimental group. A second self-selected group from Knox United Methodist Church was the control group. Third, I administered the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale and the Demographic Information Questionnaire to both groups. Fourth, the experimental group from North Judson United Methodist Church practiced silence, solitude, and reflective reading over twelve weeks. Fifth, each week the experimental group, through SurveyMonkey, verified how many days during the week they participated in the practice. Sixth, after the twelve weeks of practice, I administered the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale to both the control and experimental groups. Seventh, I compared the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale taken as the pretest to the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale taken as the posttest.

One can visualize the research design of my project as follows (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 283):

Experimental	*O1*	*X*	*O2*
Control	*O1*		*O2*

The project was a quasi-experimental nonequivalent group design that utilized a mixed-method pretest-posttest. The congregants from North Judson and Knox United Methodist Churches were preestablished groups and self-selected. A qualitative and quantitative pretest and a posttest with nonequivalent groups measured the missional identity before and after the ministry intervention.

The study occurred over a period of twelve weeks in the fall of 2010. The participants practiced disciples of solitude, silence, and reflective reading for at least fifteen minutes each day. A short reflection guide aided the participants in silencing themselves. Each week the participants of the experimental group recorded how many days they were able to complete the practice.

Instrumentation

The study used three instruments to collect data: the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale, a demographic survey, and a Weekly Practice Activity survey. The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale is a preestablished sixteen-item modified Likert scale questionnaire that measures intrinsic religiosity. The scale measures both the individuals' recognition of God's presence and their willingness to integrate their faith and life. The scale measures "spiritual experiences as an important aspect of how religiousness/spirituality is expressed in daily life for many people" (Underwood, "Ordinary Spiritual Experience" 181). In this study, the scale measured the changes in intrinsic religiosity from pre- and post-ministry intervention.

Items 1, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, and 16 on the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale relate to aspects or characteristics of a missional identity. Items 1, 15, and 16 indicate individuals' understanding of God's presence being active in their lives. Items 7 and 8

indicate a willingness to invite God to help and guide in daily activities. Items 13 and 14 pertain to how individuals allow God's presence to become incarnate in life, resulting in selfless love and acceptance of others. Selfless love and acceptance is a characteristic of the love of God in Jesus. Item 6 concerns individuals' sense of peace and harmony. Peace and harmony result when individuals align their lives with the purposes of God.

The Weekly Practice Activity survey collected information on how many times during the week the participant was able to spend at least fifteen minutes in the practice of silence, solitude, and reflective reading. Individuals would then indicate on a scale from 1 (no days) to 8 (all days) how many days they participated in the practice.

I also collected basic demographic data for both the control and experimental groups. Along with the demographic questions, one question asked the individual's attitude toward silence and solitude to determine if the individual had a positive, negative, or neutral attitude toward the practices of silence and solitude. This question was on both the pretest and posttest.

Variables

The independent variables were the daily practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading. I asked the participants to practice at least fifteen minutes of contemplative disciplines daily over twelve weeks.

The dependent variables were the changes in identity measured by the intrinsic religiosity of the participants of North Judson United Methodist Church.

The intervening variables that might influence the participants and the results of the study include not being faithful to the daily nature of the practices, personality preference making silence and solitude more difficult, and not completing the posttest.

Other intervening variables include the integration of contemplative practices before the study and individuals who are presently cultivating a missional identity.

Reliability and Validity

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale is a sixteen-item instrument designed by Dr. Lynn G. Underwood. The scale was originally designed for use in health studies, but it has also been used in the social sciences ("Daily Spiritual Experience Scale" 30). The scale has been translated into multiple languages for use in different cultures (37). The scale utilizes a six-point Likert scale for fifteen of the questions. The responses are (1) many times a day, (2) every day, (3) most days, (4) some days, (5) once in a while, (6) never or almost never. The final question, item 16, uses a four-point Likert scale with the following responses: (1) not at all, (2) somewhat close, (3) very close, and (4) as close as possible.

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale measures "subjective experiences that form an integral part of daily life for many ordinary people" (Underwood, "Ordinary Spiritual Experience" 3) and is useful for showing changes over time (3). The scale measures an individual's experience and awareness of the divine better than other scales, whether alone or in groups (3). Underwood convened several focus groups to verify the language of the scale as understandable across broad differences in orientation (4). Underwood and Jeanne A. Teresi write, "The [Daily Spiritual Experience Scale] evidenced good reliability across several studies with internal consistency estimates in the .90s" (22). I used this scale because it measured daily awareness of God's presence and showed good reliability across divergent populations.

Data Collection

I used four instruments to collect the quantitative data: (1) the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale given before the intervention to both control and experimental groups, (2) the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale given after the intervention to both the control and experimental groups, (3) the Demographic Information Questionnaire given to both the control and experimental groups, and the (4) Weekly Practice Activity survey given to the experimental group.

The study took place over twelve weeks in the fall of 2010. The last three weeks of September, North Judson and Knox United Methodist Churches had a request for participation placed in their bulletins asking for willing participants. During the week of 26 September, both the control and experimental groups took the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale questionnaire as a pretest. Both groups also filled out the Demographic Information Questionnaire. Beginning the week of 3 October, participants from North Judson began the practices of silence and solitude. On every Wednesday a SurveyMonkey e-mail was sent to those who had e-mail, so they could verify the number of days they practiced silence and solitude. For those without e-mail, a letter near the end of the study served to remind the participants to turn in their Weekly Practice Activity survey. Beginning the week of 3 January 2011, I sent the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale to the participants via SurveyMonkey. Those without e-mail or Internet access received the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale via the postal service. Both the control and experimental groups took the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale questionnaire as a posttest.

This project measured the effect that the practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on the missional identity of an individual. It used a mixed-methods, quasi-experimental research design.

Data Analysis

The null hypothesis for the research questions was that practicing silence, solitude, and reflective reading for at least fifteen minutes a day had no effect on the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist Church participants. The data analysis determined if the null hypothesis should be accepted or rejected and if an association between the practices of silence and solitude and one's missional identity existed.

While the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale measures religiosity as it pertains to one's well-being (Underwood and Teresi 22), some of the questions touch on aspects needed for missional identity. A missional identity understands that God sends individuals into the world as agents of God's kingdom. This understanding, lived out, results in Christ-referenced love. The study focused on items 1, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, and 16 of the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale to explore how the practices of silence and solitude affects one's missional identity. These items concern one's willingness to allow God to direct and guide daily activities, the extent that one senses God's presence, and the willingness, or ability to love and serve others.

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale was the main instrument used to collect data. SurveyMonkey collected the pretest and posttest responses. The data was compared using two-tailed paired sampled *t*-tests. The results of the Knox United Methodist Church participants' posttest survey served as the baseline. The comparison of results from the

North Judson United Methodist Church to the baseline results determined any statistically significant change between the pretest and posttest scores.

Every week the experimental group participants recorded how many days they were able to practice fifteen minutes of silence and solitude in the Weekly Practice Activity survey. The data was used to explore the influence of daily practice. Collecting the frequency participants engaged in silence, solitude, and reflective reading allowed me to analyze any connections between frequency and changes in individuals' missional identity.

Collecting the demographic data allowed the possibility of exploring demographic effect. The last item on the demographic portion of the survey was an open-ended question about the participants' views of silence and solitude which gave insight into the participants' understanding and attitude toward these practices prior to the intervention. This information would discover whether any preexisting positive or negative outlook had an effect on the participants' practice of the disciplines.

Ethical Procedures

In order to protect individuals' identities, they created an ID using the first initial of their mother's maiden name plus the last four digits of their social security number. Only the individual participants know their ID. The participants used their ID when recording the daily completion journal.

In order not to harm individuals by withholding ministry intervention others in their congregation could access, the research employed the participation of Knox United Methodist Church to serve as a control group for the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

The problem of the church embodying the love of Jesus is the unwillingness of individuals to practice daily habits that enable them to live missionally. Such unwillingness causes a disconnect between one's beliefs and behavior. Neglect of spiritual practices also hinders individuals from living out the mission of God.

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effect the contemplative practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist Church congregants who volunteered to participate in a twelve-week spiritual formation process.

Participants

The participants for the study were willing individuals from North Judson United Methodist Church and Knox United Methodist Church. North Judson United Methodist Church congregants served as the experimental group while congregants from Knox United Methodist Church served as the control group.

The average worship attendance at North Judson United Methodist Church is 139, which served as the population for the experimental group. Forty-four individuals from North Judson indicated interest in participating in the project. Thirty-eight participants took the pretest, and thirty-four of those individuals (89 percent) filled out both the pretests and posttests.

The majority of the participants were between 41 and 70 years old (74 percent), attend church more than three times a month (92 percent), and have been Christians for

over thirty-one years (79 percent). Only 39 percent indicated that they practiced any spiritual discipline in a typical week. The majority, 61 percent, of the individuals practiced spiritual disciplines less than a few times a month. Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 present the demographics of the experimental group.

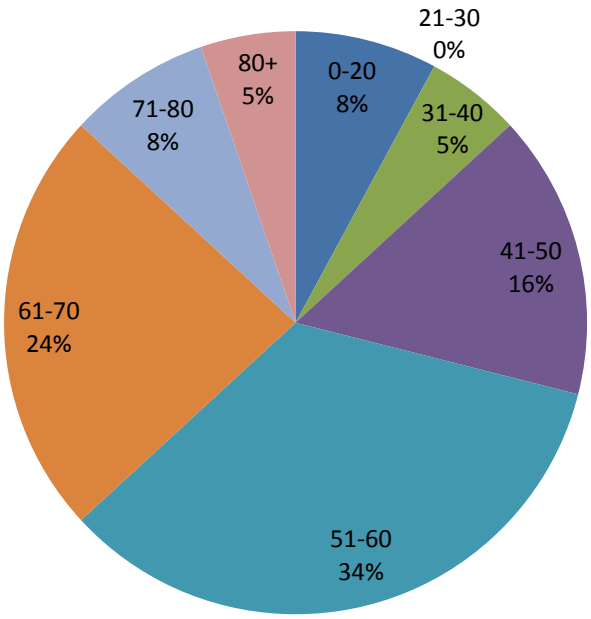

Figure 4.1. Experimental group—age.

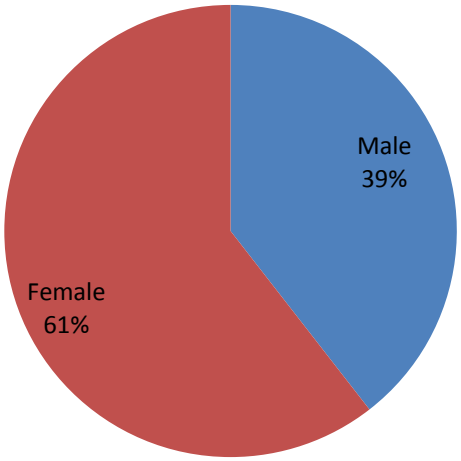

Figure 4.2. Experimental group—gender.

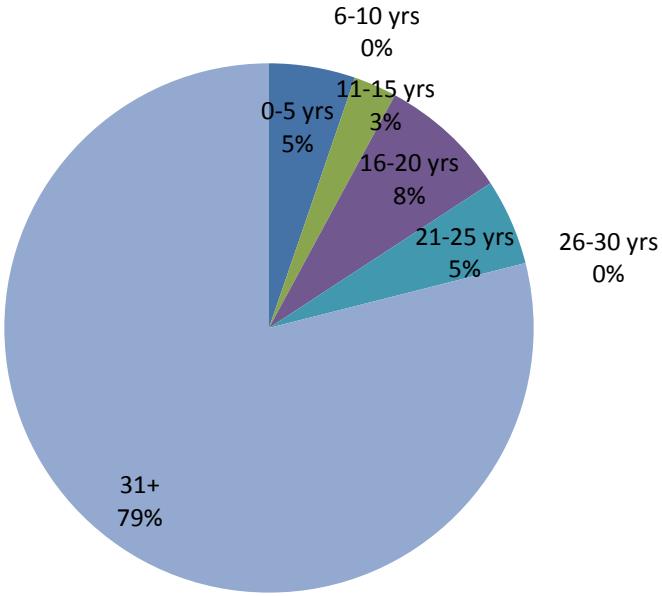

Figure 4.3. Experimental group—years as Christian.

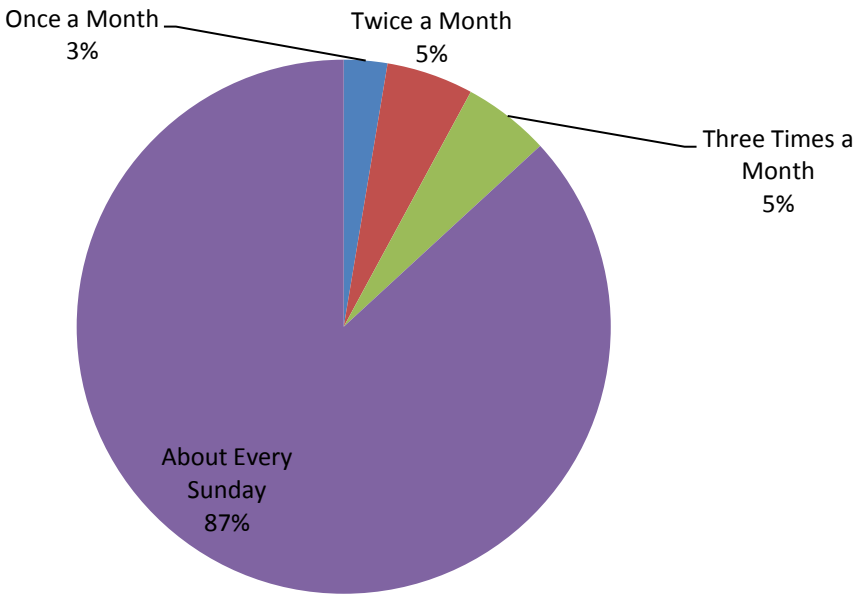

Figure 4.4. Experimental group—worship attendance.

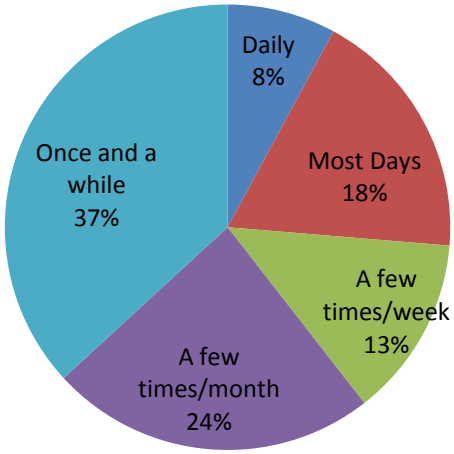

Figure 4.5. Experimental group—frequency of discipline practice.

The control group consisted of individuals from Knox United Methodist Church. Twenty-five individuals indicated interest in participating in the study, while twenty (80 percent) filled out both the pre- and posttests.

The control group ranged between 41 and 80 years old (79 percent), attend church every Sunday (91 percent), and have been Christians for over thirty-one years (68 percent). Well above half of the control group (70 percent) indicated they practiced spiritual disciplines weekly with 22 percent doing so daily. The demographics of the control group are contained in the Figures 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10.

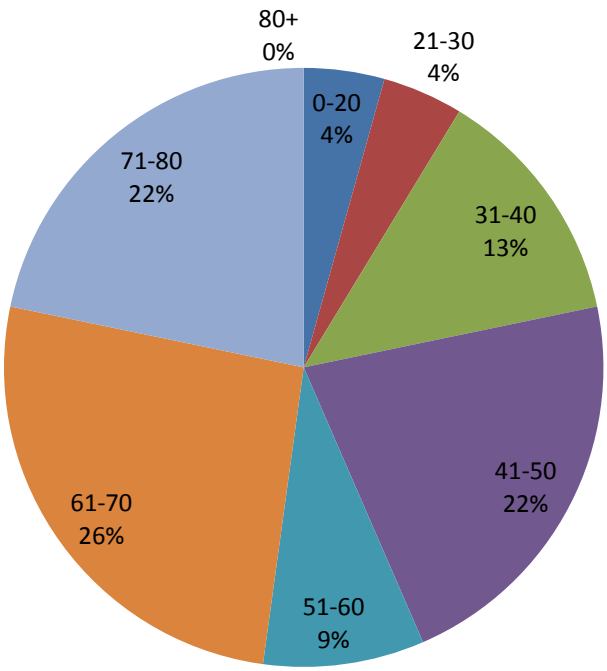

Figure 4.6. Control group—age.

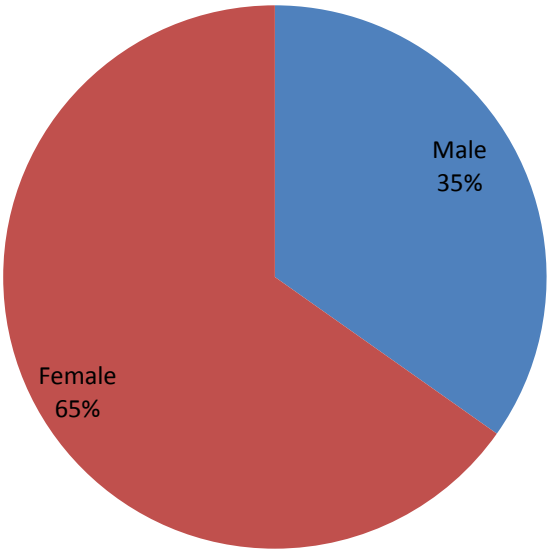

Figure 4.7. Control group—gender.

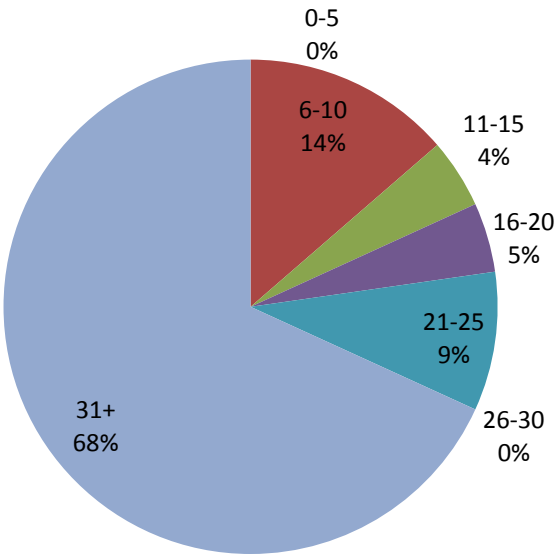

Figure 4.8. Control group—years as a Christian.

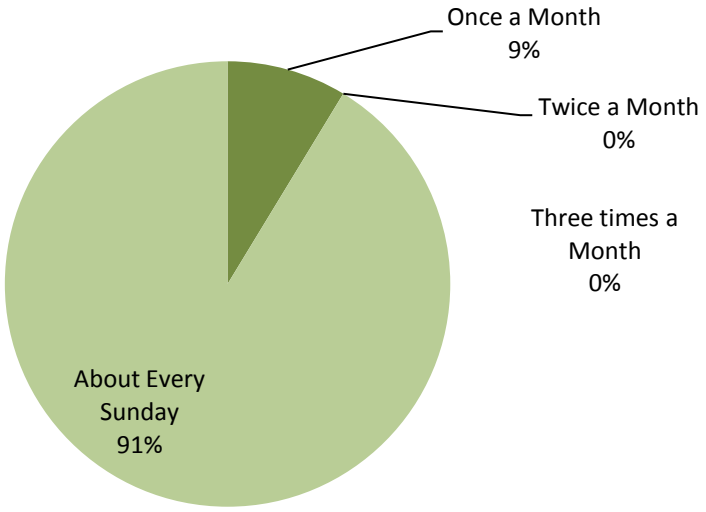

Figure 4.9. Control group—worship attendance.

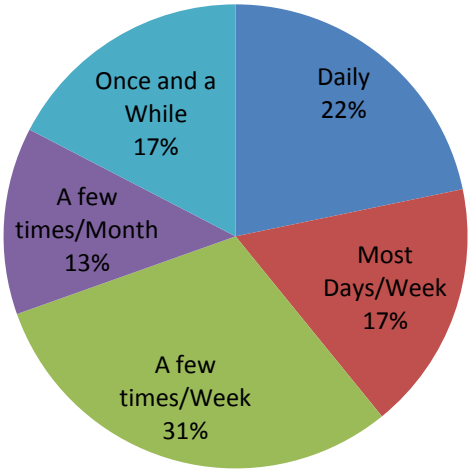

Figure 4.10. Control group—frequency of discipline practice.

Research Question #1

What was the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist congregants based on the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale prior to the introduction of the spiritual formation process?

Most of the responses from the pretest were in the mid-range of the scale. The majority of respondents reported experiencing the attribute addressed in the item most days or some days during the week.

The study focused on three characteristics from the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES): incarnation, context, and *missio Dei*. Four items on the DSES relate to an incarnational awareness. Item 1 had 38 percent of the responses indicated they experienced God's presence most days while 9 percent said many times a day and 3 percent said they never experience God's presence. No participants felt that they had deep harmony or peace many times a day on item 6, while 64 percent stated they had peace most days or some days. Item 15 shows that participants have a desire to be closer to God with 76 percent responding that they had this desire every day or most days and 18 percent signifying they desired to be closer to God many times a day.

I converted item 16, "How close do you feel to God," from a four-point Lickert scale to a six-point scale to match the other fifteen items on the DSES. The author of the scale, Dr. Underwood ("Re: Daily Spiritual Experience Scale"), suggested the change. Underwood also suggested making response 1 high and 6 low to match the other items on the scale. The conversion formula was 1 = 6, 2 = 4, 3 = 2 and 4 = 1.

Less than half of the participants (41 percent) felt very close to God or as close as possible compared to 59 percent who felt somewhat close to God or not close to God at

all. Considering that 92 percent of the participants considered themselves Christian, the sense of not feeling close to God is a bit surprising.

Items 7 and 8 relate to God's influence through daily activities or context. For item 7, 67 percent of the responses replied that they ask for God's help most days or some days while only 24 percent asked for God's help daily. Item 8 had 21 percent of the participants feeling that God guides them daily, while 27 percent felt that God only directs them once a while, never, or almost never.

The mission of God is selfless love incarnate. Items 13 and 14 from the DSES touch on one's willingness to accept and love others, even when the person has "done something wrong." A majority of the participants (68 percent) responded that they felt a selfless caring for others at least most days (Item 13). Only 3 percent said they felt selfless caring for others once in a while and none believed they never felt selfless care. Most of the participants (82 percent) believed they could accept others even when they do something wrong (Item 14) on most or some days. While none of the respondents reported that they could accept others every day, 9 percent indicated they accepted the wrongdoing of others many times a day. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide an overview of the experimental group's responses to the pretest survey.

Table 4.1. Experimental Group's Pretest Response (N=34)

Question #	Many Times a Day %	Every Day %	Most Days %	Some Days %	Once in a While %	Never or Almost Never %
1	9	20	38	15	15	3
6	0	12	32	32	21	3
7	18	6	41	26	6	3
8	3	18	26	26	24	3
13	6	15	47	29	3	0
14	9	0	50	32	6	3
15	18	41	35	0	6	0

Table 4.2. Pretest Responses for Item 16

Question #	Not at All %	Somewhat Close %	Very Close %	As Close as Possible %
16	6	53	38	3

Other than item 15, the responses from the pretest are in the midrange of the six-point Lickert scale. Responses to item 15, desiring to be closer to God, fall closer to the first part of the scale, signifying a strong desire to be closer or in union with God. Table 4.3 presents the means and standard deviation for the responses.

Table 4.3. Pretest Means and Standard Deviation

Item #	Mean (n=34)	SD
1	3.15	1.26
6	3.71	1.03
7	3.06	1.25
8	3.59	1.21
13	3.09	0.90
14	3.35	1.04
15	2.35	0.98
16	3.26	1.24

Combining the appropriate items from the DSES to create a composite view helps assess the missional identity of the participants in order to explore whether the contemplative practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had any effect. Various items on the DSES relate to one's missional identity. Three characteristics define missional identity: God directing and guiding one's daily activities, sensing God's presence, and the willingness, or desire, to love and serve others. Analyzing the means of multiple items and calculating the means creates a composite representation of the data.

Items 1, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16 from the DSES form the missional identity composite. Subdividing the missional identity composite into three smaller composites gives a view of the three missional characteristics. The items that reflect a missional attitude of incarnation (items 1, 6, 15, 16) create the Incarnational composite. The items that reveal individuals' willingness to allow God to lead them in their context (items 7, 8) form the contextual composite. Finally, the items that display individuals' yearning for God's will to be done shown by selfless love (items 13, 14) form the *missio Dei* composite. These composites help determine an individual's missional identity (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Composite Composition

Missional Identity Aspect	DSES Item
Daily Spiritual Experience Scale composite (DSES)	All items
Missional identity composite	1, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16
Incarnational composite	1, 6, 15, 16
Contextual composite	7, 8
Missio Dei composite	13, 14

For the pretest, the composite score for the DSES composite was 3.06. The missional identity composite was 3.19. The incarnational composite was 3.12. The contextual composite was 3.32 and the *missio Dei* composite was 3.22 (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Pretest Composite Results

Missional Indexes	Means
Daily Spiritual Experience Scale composite (DSES)	3.06
Missional identity composite	3.19
Incarnational composite	3.12
Contextual composite	3.32
Missio Dei composite	3.22

Research Question #2

What was the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist congregants based on the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale after participating in the spiritual formation process?

The posttest responses show movement toward missional identity (see Table 4.6). Individuals chose the "many times a day" option 20 percent or more on all items except 14 and 15. All indicators of missional identity were stronger in the posttest.

On item 1, 44 percent said they experience God's presence many times a day or every day. Only 18 percent said they experience God's presence once in a while, or never or almost never. Item 6 has 30 percent sensing a deep inner peace or harmony many times a day or every day while only 12 percent said they experienced inner peace once in a while or never or almost never. Item 15 had an overwhelming response of 74 percent reporting the desired to be closer or in union with God every day or many times a day.

Along with these indicators of incarnation, 62 percent believed they were very close to God or as close as possible.

The contextual aspects of the DSES show that individuals are asking God to guide them and feeling guided by God. About half (49 percent) indicate that they ask for God's help (item 7) at least once a day compared to 12 percent who only do so once in a while. Even though 49 percent asked for God's guidance at least daily (item 7), only 35 percent felt God guided them (item 8).

Item 13 showed that 35 percent felt a selfless caring for others at least once a day. If those who felt a selfless caring for others most days were included, then 88 percent of the participants experienced selfless caring most days during the week. Item 14 responses revealed that 29 percent could accept others every day or many times a day, while 53 percent indicated that they were able to accept others most days (see Table 4.6 and 4.7).

Table 4.6. Experimental Group's Posttest Responses

Question #	Many Times a Day %	Every Day %	Most Days %	Some Days %	Once in a While %	Never or Almost Never %
1	29	15	26	12	12	6
6	21	9	26	32	9	3
7	26	23	24	15	12	0
8	20	15	32	18	9	6
13	20	15	53	12	0	0
14	6	23	53	15	3	0
15	15	59	17	9	0	0

Table 4.7. Experimental Group's Response to Item 16

Question #	Not at All %	Somewhat Close %	Very Close %	As Close as Possible %
16	3	35	56	6

The posttest means fall between "most days" and "every day" for all of the items except item 6. The means for the items, except for item 6, are below the midrange of the scale, which is closer to missional identity (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Individual Item Means and Standard Deviation

Item #	Mean	SD
1	2.79	1.57
6	3.09	1.38
7	2.62	1.35
8	2.97	1.45
13	2.56	0.96
14	2.85	0.86
15	2.21	0.81
16	2.76	1.18

All of the composites are below 3. The responses for all of the composites fall between "most days" and "every day." If the composites reach 1, they reflect experiencing missional tendencies many times a day (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9. Missional Composite Results

Missional Identity Aspect	Mean
Daily Spiritual Experience Scale composite (DSES)	2.63
Missional identity composite	2.73
Incarnational composite	2.71
Contextual composite	2.79
Missio Dei composite	2.71

Research Question #3

How did the spiritual formation process affect the participants' missional identity?

The null hypothesis was that practicing silence, solitude, and reflective reading for at least fifteen minutes a day had no effect on missional identity.

Experimental Group Results

All items showed a movement toward missional identity between the pretest and posttest of the experimental group. The desire was for the participants' answers to move closer to response 1, which would mean the individuals experienced or reflected missional characteristics many times a day. The lower mean of the DSES items and composites are an indication that individuals are integrating missional characteristics. Any positive change in the means of the items between pretest and posttest denotes movement toward missional identity. The largest change between pretest and posttest was .62 and the smallest was .14. Table 4.10 gives the difference between the pretest and posttest scores.

Table 4.10. Pretest/Posttest Results

Item #	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Change	Pretest SD	Posttest SD
1	3.15	2.79	0.36	1.57	1.26
6	3.71	3.09	0.62	1.38	1.03
7	3.06	2.62	0.44	1.35	1.25
8	3.59	2.97	0.62	1.45	1.21
13	3.09	2.56	0.53	0.96	0.90
14	3.35	2.85	0.50	0.86	1.04
15	2.35	2.21	0.14	0.81	0.98
16	3.26	2.76	0.50	1.24	1.18

Figure 4.11 shows the change between pretest and posttest scores for each item. Each item is moving in the desired direction. All the posttest responses are lower than the pretest responses. The data indicates movement toward experiencing missional characteristics more frequently.

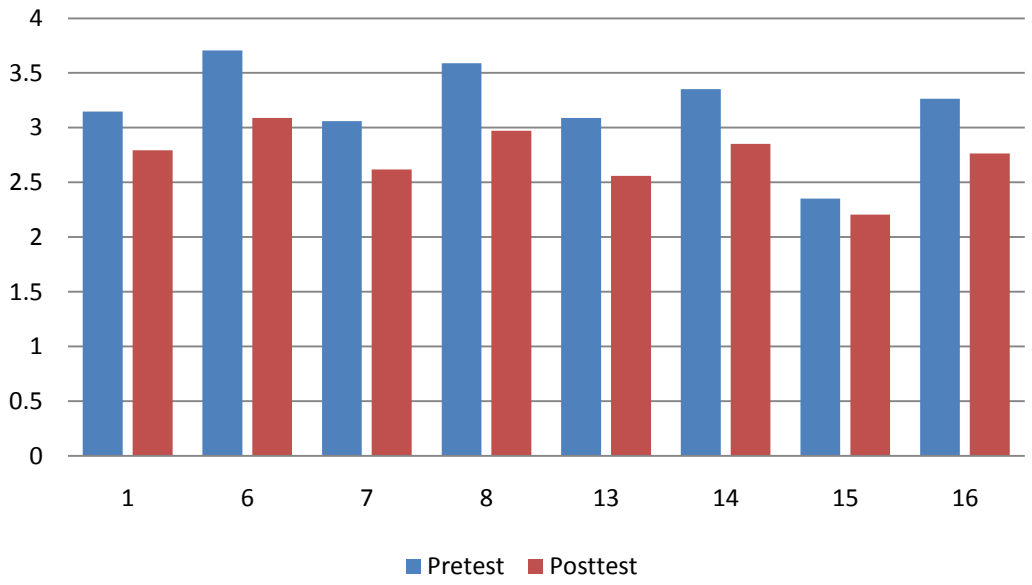

Figure 4.11. Pretest posttest comparison.

The evidence indicates movement toward missional identity. The independent variable was the practice of silence, solitude, and reflective reading. The responses reveal that the independent variable had a positive effect on the dependent variables.

I ran *t*-tests to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed between changes in missional identity and the practice of silence, solitude, and reflected reading. A two-tailed *t*-test with confidence level at 95 percent revealed that a relationship existed between the changes in missional identity and the ministry intervention. All the questions except item 15 had *p*-values ($p < .05$) that indicated statistical significance at the 5 percent level suggesting that the changes between pretest and posttest are not coincidental. For those items where the *p*-values are less than .05 the null hypothesis can be rejected and a relationship between the increases in missional identity and practicing silence, solitude, and reflective reading can be confirmed. The only question not showing statistical significance was item 15, the question concerning the desire to be closer to God. For item 15, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. Experimental Group Measurements (N=34)

	Pretest		Posttest			*P
Item	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T	
1	3.15	1.26	2.79	1.57	2.33	0.02612
6	3.71	1.03	3.09	1.38	3.27	0.002520
7	3.06	1.25	2.62	1.35	2.68	0.01137
8	3.59	1.21	2.97	1.45	3.78	0.00063
13	3.09	0.90	2.56	0.96	4.66	0.00005
14	3.35	1.04	2.85	0.86	3.25	0.00266
15	2.35	0.98	2.21	0.81	1.09	0.2818
16	3.26	1.24	2.76	1.18	3.38	0.0019

*P value of <.05 is statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

The composites also show movement toward missional identity. The change in pretest and posttest were all in the range of .44 to .52 with the contextual index seeing the most change (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12. Missional Indexes Pretest/Posttest Results

Missional Composites	Pretest	Posttest	Change
Daily Spiritual Experience Scale composite (DSES)	3.06	2.63	0.44
Missional identity composite	3.19	2.73	0.46
Incarnational composite	3.12	2.71	0.44
Contextual composite	3.32	2.79	0.52
Missio Dei composite	3.22	2.71	0.51

Control Group Results

To determine if times of silence, solitude, and reflective reading influenced the participants' missional identity, rather than attributing changes to maturity over time, a control group participated in the pretest and posttests at the same intervals as the experimental group. While the results showed changes between the control group's pretest and posttest scores, they were smaller than the changes in the experimental group's pretest and posttest responses. The largest positive change between the pretest and posttest means was .30. Two items, 13 and 15, moved in the opposite direction than desired (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13. Control Group's Pretest/Posttest Comparison (N=20)

Item #	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Change	Pretest SD	Posttest SD
1	2.75	2.70	0.05	1.29	1.34
6	3.05	2.80	0.25	1.28	1.24
7	2.90	2.60	0.30	1.37	1.14
8	3.00	2.90	0.10	1.26	1.21
13	2.35	2.55	-0.20	0.75	0.83
14	2.90	2.90	0.0	0.79	0.97
15	2.35	2.45	-0.10	1.09	1.23
16	2.70	2.45	0.25	1.30	0.94

Figure 4.12 shows the changes between the control group's pretest and posttest. Item 14 had no change, while items 1 and 8 had little change. Items 13 and 15 had change, but in the wrong direction.

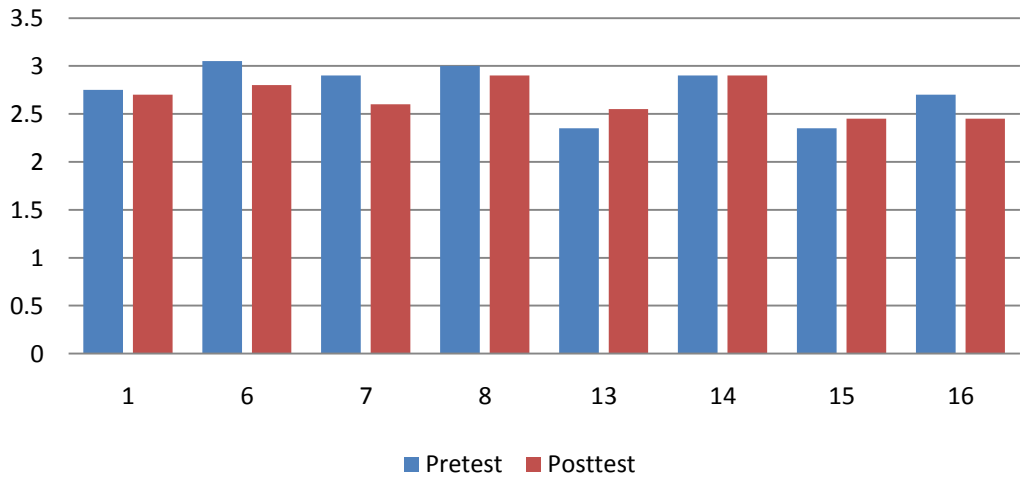

Figure 4.12. Pretest/posttest response comparison.

The *p*-values for the control group did not show any statistical significance at the 5 percent level. The high *p*-values signify that a relationship does not exist between the changes recorded and the non-intervention (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14. Control Group Measurements (N=20)

	Pretest		Posttest			*P
Item	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T	
1	2.75	1.29	2.70	1.340	.2240	0.8252
6	3.05	1.28	2.80	1.240	1.0970	0.2865
7	2.90	1.37	2.60	1.140	1.3710	0.1864
8	3.00	1.26	2.09	1.210	.3697	0.7157
13	2.35	0.75	2.55	0.830	-1.1650	0.2585
14	2.90	0.79	2.90	0.970	0.0000	1.0000
15	2.35	1.09	2.45	1.230	-0.8094	0.4283
16	2.70	1.30	2.45	0.944	1.0966	0.2865

The control group's pretest responses show more of a missional identity than the experimental group's pretest. However, the changes between the control group's pretest and their posttest scores are not as dramatic as that of the experimental group. The largest change for any composite was .20, which was the contextual composite concerning willingness to allow God to lead in daily activities. The *missio Dei* composite showed a decrease by .10. The full missional identity composite had only a .08 change (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15. Composite Results

Missional Identity Aspect	Pretest	Posttest	Change
Daily Spiritual Experience Scale composite (DSES)	2.58	2.58	0.00
Missional identity composite	2.75	2.67	0.08
Incarnational composite	2.71	2.60.	0.11
Contextual composite	2.95	2.75	0.20
Missio Dei composite	2.63	2.73	-0.10

Comparison of Control Group to Experimental Group

The experimental group experienced a more dramatic change than that of the control group. Both selfless concern for others and accepting others even when they do things wrong had the greatest difference. Table 4.16 has the full comparisons.

Table 4.16. Comparison of Change

Question	Experimental	Control
1—feel God's presence	0.36	0.05
6—inner peace/harmony	0.62	0.25
7—ask God's help	0.44	0.30
8—feel guided by God	0.62	0.10
13—selfless care for others	0.53	-0.20
14—accept others	0.50	0.00
15—desire to be closer	0.14	-0.10
16—closeness to God	0.50	0.25

The evidence suggests a greater change took place for those who practiced silence, solitude, and reflected reading than those who did not take part in the ministry intervention. The composites show the experimental group experienced a larger change in missional identity than the control group (see Table 4.17).

Table 4.17. Comparison of Composites

Missional Identity Aspect	Experimental	Control
Daily Spiritual Experience Scale composite (DSES)	0.44	0.00
Missional Identity composite	0.46	0.08
Incarnational composite	0.40	0.11
Contextual composite	0.53	0.20
Missio Dei composite	0.51	-0.10

A Mann-Whitney U test compared the changes in scores of the experimental and control groups. A Mann-Whitney test compares two independent groups to see if they are similar or from the same population. The resulting *p*-value was .003, which is less than the .05 confidence level, indicating that the differences in the two groups are not due to chance. In this case, the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Comparisons within Experimental Group

I collected weekly practice data to probe the whether the frequency of practice had an effect on the participants' missional identity. I used the demographic data collected from the pretest to examine how practicing spiritual disciples before the study began influenced missional identity.

Comparison of practice frequency. To understand the results further, I explored if the frequency of practice had any effect. Each week the experimental group participants would indicate how many times during the week they participated in the contemplative practices. The expectation was for participants to spend at least fifteen minutes of focused time with no distractions in silence, solitude, and reflective reading. Focused time excluded such time as driving in a car, walking, or other such activities. The individuals were only to include those times they were able to be still without

distraction. If data did not exist for a particular week, the week was not included in that participants' averages.

Twelve individuals (35 percent) were faithful to the practice three days or less. Seven participants (21 percent) practiced silence, solitude, and reflective reading more than three times a week, but less than five times. Fifteen individuals (44 percent) practiced the discipline for five days or more (see Figure 4.13).

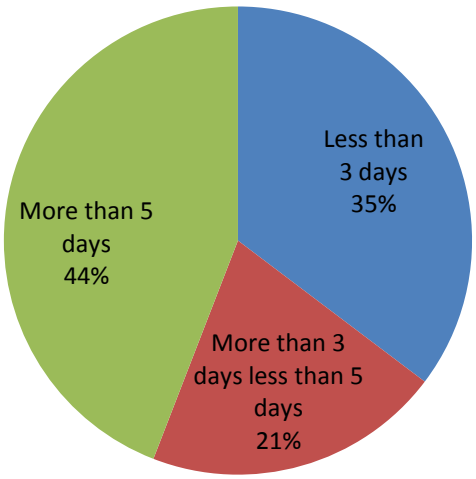

Figure 4.13. Average frequency of practice.

In order to understand the nature of how silence, solitude, and reflected reading affected the participants' missional identity, the results from the experimental group were divided between individuals practicing the discipline regularly and those not practicing the discipline regularly. Because the control group did not participate in the practice, those of the experimental group not regularly practicing the discipline were comparable to a control group.

The evidence shows that those who were faithful to the practice of silence, solitude, and reflected reading experienced a slight increase in movement toward missional identity. The largest gain was item 6, feeling an inner peace or deep harmony, at a 1.07 increase in the mean. For those who practiced the discipline three times a week or less, the largest increase was .66 for being guided by God (item 8). Along with Item 8, items 15 and 16 also show a greater gain for those practicing the discipline less than three days a week. Both 15 and 16 concern how close an individual feels to God, or their desire to be closer to God. Since the samples were small, n=12 and n=15, definitive statements could not be made (see Table 4.18).

Table 4.18. Comparison of Practice Frequency

Question	≤3 times per week n=12			≥5 times pre week n=15		
	Pretest	**Posttest**	**Change**	**Pretest**	**Posttest**	**Change**
1—feel God's presence	3.58	3.33	.20	2.73	2.47	.26
6—inner peace/harmony	4.17	3.83	.34	3.47	2.4	1.07
7—ask God's help	3.42	2.92	.50	2.8	2.27	.53
8—feel guided by God	4.08	3.42	.66	3.27	2.67	.60
13—selfless care for others	3.58	3.08	.50	2.8	2.13	.67
14—accept others	3.58	3.33	.25	3.2	2.53	.67
15—desire to be closer	2.58	2.33	.25	2.27	2.2	.07
16—closeness to God	3.67	3.17	.50	2.87	2.47	.40

Except for items 1, 7, 15, and 16, the *p*-values show a relationship ($p < .05$) between the individuals practicing silence, solitude, and reflective reading for six days or more and the changes they experienced in missional identity. Individuals practicing silence and solitude three days or less did not show a relational significance ($p > .05$)

except for item 13. These results could indicate that regular practice of silence and solitude has a greater impact than irregular practice. However, since both of these samples were small, making definitive statements is difficult (see Table 4.19).

Table 4.19. Comparison of Practice Frequency *P*-Values

Question	≤3 times per week n=12	≥5 times per week n=15
1—feel God's presence	0.3889	0.1643
6—inner peace/harmony	0.3943	0.000142
7—ask God's help	0.1394	0.07169
8—feel guided by God	0.0874	0.007036
13—selfless care for others	0.0261	0.00092
14—accept others	0.3889	0.01236
15—desire to be closer	0.1911	0.8062
16—closeness to God	0.0819	0.08242

Prior spiritual formation practices. Another aspect of the intervention was whether individuals who regularly practiced spiritual disciplines before the intervention were affected differently from those who practiced spiritual disciples infrequently. Of the thirty-four responses, thirteen (38 percent) indicated they practiced spiritual disciplines a few times per week or more prior to the study compared to twenty-one (62 percent) who responded they practice spiritual disciplines a few times a month or once and a while.

Those not practicing spiritual disciplines regularly (at least once a week) before the study began experienced a greater move toward missional identity than those who were practicing spiritual disciplines. The largest increases were for items 6, inner peace and harmony, and 13, feeling a selfless care for others. Those who had been practicing

spiritual disciplines saw a decrease in their desire to be closer to God (item 16) and the greatest increase in feeling guided by God (item 8; see Table 4.20).

Table 4.20 – Comparison of Prior Practice of Disciplines

Question	Prior Practice n=13			No Prior Practice n=21		
	Pretest	**Posttest**	**Change**	**Pretest**	**Posttest**	**Change**
1—feel God's presence	2.92	2.31	.61	3.29	3.10	.19
6—inner peace/harmony	3.46	2.92	.54	3.86	3.19	.67
7—ask God's help	2.54	2.15	.39	3.38	2.90	.48
8—feel guided by God	3.23	2.54	.69	3.81	3.24	.57
13—Selfless care for others	2.77	2.46	.31	3.29	2.62	.67
14—accept others	3.00	2.62	.38	3.57	3.00	.57
15—desire to be closer	2.00	2.08	-.08	2.57	2.29	.28
16—closeness to God	2.69	2.31	.38	3.62	3.05	.57

Those who prior to the study did not practice spiritual disciplines regularly had a lower *p*-value than those who practiced spiritual disciplines frequently. Although, on item 1, feeling God's presence, and item 8, feeling guided by God daily, those who practiced spiritual disciplines weekly prior to the study showed a *p*-value less than .05 indicating statistical significance. For those who did not practice spiritual disciples regularly, items 1 and 15 did not show statistic significance. Any *p*-value less than .05 signifies that a relationship exists between the ministry intervention and the changes between the pretest and posttest (see Table 4.21).

Table 4.21. Comparison of Familiar and Unfamiliar

Question	Familiar (*p*-value) n=13	Unfamiliar (*p*-value) n=21
1—feel God's presence	0.02541	0.3293000
6—inner peace/harmony	0.17010	0.0049000
7—ask God's help	0.23970	0.0212300
8—feel guided by God	0.01284	0.0192100
13—selfless care for others	0.10390	0.0001576
14—accept others	0.23970	0.0022130
15—desire to be closer	0.33700	0.1861000
16—closeness to God	0.09608	0.0103800

Qualitative Data

One open-ended question in the demographic section provided qualitative data. The question asked the participants to give their thoughts and attitudes toward silence and solitude. The responses gave a broad range of replies.

Individuals from both the experimental and control groups noted the importance of silence and solitude. While I did not ask who practiced silence and solitude, nine individuals answered the question as if they were familiar with the practice or currently practiced the discipline. Three participants from the experimental group seemed to be familiar with silence and solitude, with two of those indicating that they currently spend time in silence and solitude.

One theme that emerged from the posttest was the difficulty of practicing silence. One individual confessed, "Generally I like to have noise around me." Others mentioned that, while they believed silence and solitude was important, they found finding time to practice it difficult. On the pretest, two individuals mentioned the difficulty in acquiring

the discipline to practice silence and solitude. A couple of individuals connected their lack of discipline with finding time.

The pretest had three individuals displaying negative feelings toward the idea of silence and solitude. One participant simply put "bad" as a response. Six individuals seemed neutral to the idea. Some responses were, "I'm not against it," "easier said than done as a regular routine," and "solitude,… is that like no one around? Does a cat count?" Fifteen individuals had positive remarks about silence and solitude. Some of the responses were, "For it," "good," "enjoy it," and "blessing." Four individuals were looking forward to the practice in hope. Some contributors wanted to get better at silence and solitude, while others liked the idea and thought they would benefit.

Some uncertainty existed concerning the nature of silence and solitude. The definition for this study was that silence and solitude was a focused time on God and God's purposes, rather than simply a quiet or relaxed time. On the pretest, one respondent wrote, "I pray during times of silence and slitude [sic], mostly while cross country skiing. It is not really a practice that I follow on a regular basis." Another wrote, "Silence is a 'thinking' time—can be while doing dishes, while peeling potatoes, or just sitting on the porch. Everone [sic] needs quiet time!" Some believed that silence and solitude meant time alone with no one around. Such time can be refreshing but can miss the transformative aspects of the spiritual discipline.

Others did view silence and solitude as time to focus on God and God's purposes. Responses such as, "Silence gives me plenty of time to listen for God to speak to me. Solitude gives me plenty of time to talk to God," or, "I feel that silence is needed sometimes to hear God's voice and feel closer to God," reflect an understanding that

silence and solitude imply time focused on God rather than on self. Even after the study, some still found silence and solitude elusive. One called the practice "evasive and uncertain" indicating confusion even after the three months.

A prevalent posttest theme was how difficult silence and solitude were. Sixteen different individuals mentioned the difficulty they had in finding time, quieting their mind, or not having enough discipline. One person wrote, "I thought it would be easy to accomplish this, but as time went on I realized it was more difficult." The theme of how difficult silence and solitude were came up sixteen times in the posttest, yet even with within the difficulties, participants saw them as beneficial. One wrote, "It is very hard for me to be silent very long when I am along [sic] I do like the solitude." On the posttest one individual wrote that while he or she believed that silence and solitude could be very rewarding, "my problem is the lack of discipline...." According to the research, the difficulty of practicing silence and solitude is not the lack of time or discipline. The problem inherent in silence and solitude is it causes individuals to "bump into" themselves (Prochnik 334) and face things they would rather not face.

Many individuals found the practice a positive experience. Fifteen individuals had good things to say about their practice. Words such as relaxing, peaceful, refreshing, recharging, and beneficial described times of silence and solitude. A few people revealed that they had encounters with God during the study. One wrote, "It has brought me closer to God and is something I will continue." Another wrote, "I had some close encounters … with God." Silence and solitude give opportunity for individuals to encounter God, find their true selves, and be transformed by God's redeeming love. Transformed by love, individuals find the increased capacity to love God and others.

Summary of Major Findings

The demographic data, comparison of the pretests and posttests, the experimental group's results compared to the control group's results and the qualitative data lead to the following findings:

1. Spiritual disciples are practiced infrequently even among seasoned Christians.

2. Silence and solitude have a positive effect on one's missional identity as measured by the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale.

3. Regular spiritual disciplines have a positive effect on one's missional identity.

4. The greatest change took place in those who were not regular in their practice of any spiritual discipline before the research began.

5. The change in the experimental group's selfless care for others was far more dramatic than that for the control group's.

6. The culture is so frantic that even when individuals recognize the importance and benefits of the practice, they rarely make time for it.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

The problem of the church embodying the love of Jesus is the unwillingness of individuals to practice daily habits that enable them to live missionally. Such unwillingness hinders individuals from living out the mission of God.

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effect the contemplative practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on the missional identity of the North Judson United Methodist Church congregants who volunteered to participate in a twelve-week spiritual formation process.

Spiritual Disciplines Not Regularly Practiced

The first finding was the low percentage of participants who practiced spiritual disciplines daily. Only 39 percent of the experimental group reported practicing any spiritual discipline in a given week. Practicing spiritual disciplines a few times a week is not regular practice. Throughout the week 26 percent stated that they practiced spiritual disciplines daily, or most days. Only 8 percent could say they practice disciplines every day.

The control group did better with 70 percent practicing spiritual disciplines weekly and 39 percent practicing daily or most days during the week. Only 22 percent of the control group reported that they practiced spiritual disciplines daily. Even though the control group's numbers are higher, the lack of daily spiritual formative practices is a sad realization.

Considering that 91 percent of the control group and 87 percent of the experimental group attend worship services weekly, these individuals are the heart of the church. Having 39 percent for the control group and 26 percent for the experimental group practicing disciplines most days or every day is low for an otherwise dedicated group. Perhaps some of the issue is the Christian focus on God's grace and that individuals cannot earn a place before God. While God's grace is sufficient, the disciplines are concerned with formation in God's way and character. Willard writes "God is not opposed to effort but to *earning* [original emphasis]" (Johnson, Matthews, and Willard 107). Given the benefit of the disciplines, spending time in formative practices is vital for God to form individuals. The research points to a void of formative practices even among those who are most devoted. Both the control and experimental groups confirm that spiritual disciplines are not always daily practices.

Positive Effect of Silence, Solitude, and Reflective Reading

The second major finding was that silence, solitude, and reflective reading had a positive effect on the missional identity of the experimental group participants as measured by the DSES. Even though finding a positive relationship between contemplative practices and missional identity was the purpose of the research, the finding came as quite a surprise. I did not think a short period of three months was sufficient time to show change. Change usually comes over constant and faithful practice, and to see results in such a short period was surprising.

The responses on the pretest gave a picture of the individuals' missional identity before the ministry intervention. The experimental group's responses were in the midrange of the scale between responses 3 and 4. The control group's results were better

with means between responses 2 and 3. The missional identity composite reflects the overall answers with the experimental group's 3.19 compared to the control group's 2.75.

The posttest missional identity composite was 2.73 for the experimental group. The difference between the pretest and posttest was .46. The control group's posttest result was 2.69 which was only a .06 change from the pretest. The results suggest that the experimental group was experiencing missional characteristics more frequently. The lower score on the posttest indicates increased connections with a missional identity. The control group, which did not participate in the ministry intervention, did not show the same movement toward missional identity as the experimental group.

T-tests helped determine if the changes in missional identity were due to the ministry intervention or chance. The resulting *p*-values denoted that a relationship did exist between the experimental group's move toward missional identity and the ministry intervention.

The *p*-values for all the individual items except item 15 showed a relationship between the ministry intervention and change between pretest and posttest responses. Item 15 concerns wanting to be closer or in union with God. While I saw improvement in the score of item 15, it was the smallest change of all the items. Perhaps a lack of desire to be closer to God contributes to the lack of regular practice of spiritual disciples. Even after practicing silence, solitude, and reflective reading, desire increased only slightly. C. S. Lewis writes that lack of desire forfeits God's infinite joy:

> It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. (26)

The data suggest that Lewis is right. The desire to be closer to God is weak and the reluctance to enter into activities that draw one closer to God reflects weak desire.

Positive Effect of Regular Spiritual Disciplines Practice

The third major finding was that regular practice of silence and solitude was more beneficial than having irregular practice. The intervening variables were the daily practices of silence, solitude, and reflective reading for at least fifteen minutes. Within the experimental group, fifteen participants observed these practices at least five days a week. Twelve individuals were not able to complete the practice daily more than three days per week. The evidence suggests that those who practiced silence and solitude five days or more during the week showed greater movement toward missional identity than those who practiced silence and solitude three days or less.

The implication is that regular practice is vital. While the importance of regular practice is one of the findings of the research, the discovery is not surprising. Throughout history Christians have viewed spiritual disciplines as vital for living a Christian life. Wesley made extensive use of spiritual disciplines while teaching others to do the same. Willard, among others, have created the Theological and Cultural Thinkers group because they were concerned that the church focused more on consumerism than spiritual formation (Thrall et al. 64). The authors note that spiritual formation is about "development of life in the Kingdom of God that comes to us through the risen Christ" (577). Intentional development is indispensable. As individuals practice disciplines such as silence, solitude, and reflective reading, they become increasingly receptive to God's presence and influence.

Greater Impact for Those New to Spiritual Disciplines

Participants indicated on the pretest how often they practiced spiritual disciplines. Overall, the ministry intervention had a greater impact on those who did not practice spiritual disciplines before the study than on those who had previously practiced the disciplines. Thirteen individuals indicated that they practiced spiritual disciplines a few times a week or more. Twenty-one said they practiced disciplines a few times a month or less. Since the sample groups were small, making any definitive statement is difficult.

However, if spiritual disciples help individuals become more receptive to God, then the conclusion is that adding daily contemplative practices would have a greater effect on those who are not used to such receptivity. Those previously practicing disciplines already had a level of receptivity. An increased level of receptivity could explain why those not previously practicing disciplines had greater increases overall.

Silence, Solitude, and Reflective Reading Impact on Selfless Care and Acceptance

Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God with one's whole heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28). Later as Jesus was teaching his disciples, he told them that he was giving them a new commandment: love one another as they had been loved (John 13:34). Jesus incarnated the love of God and love of other. He displayed selfless love not only on the cross but also in his life. Jesus' love of God was evident as he gave his life for the Father's purposes. Selfless love is also to be the defining characteristic of Jesus' followers (John 13:35).

The data revealed that the experimental group grew in the capacity to love selflessly and to accept others. Selfless love is perhaps the most important missional

characteristic. Jesus called his followers to be people of love. The experimental group saw an increase in the selfless care for others and the ability to accept others even when they did things wrong. This increase is significant. The ultimate goal of missional spirituality and the life of faith is to love others as God, through Jesus, loves them.

The control group saw a decline in accepting others and no improvement in accepting others even when they did things wrong. The time of year could be one possible explanation for the decline. The participants took the pretest in early October and the posttest the first part of January. One possible explanation is that the stress of the Christmas and New Year's holidays caused those of the control group to be not as accepting or loving. However, that explanation does not illuminate the improvement in both of these items for the experimental group. The implication is independent variable influenced the change in the dependent variables.

The experimental group believed that they could accept people even when they did something wrong, which is significant. Mulholland discusses how most love is self-referenced (*Deeper Journey* 84). However, accepting others even when they do wrong does not reflect a self-referenced love but something different. The ability to accept others when they do things wrong is a quality of selfless love.

As individuals become more open to God, they begin incarnating God's love and God is able to love through them. I have already pointed out that the love of God and neighbor is filtered through the Incarnation (York 116), and as individuals become receptive to God they are able to love the way God loves them (Story 151-58). Participating in practices that increase receptivity to God also enables individuals to love as God loves. The experimental group's responses reflected a willingness to accept others

even when they did something wrong, suggesting a deeper receptivity to God and his will. Recognizing God's presence in one's daily life is crucial for missional identity and results in selfless love for others. The responses indicate a movement toward this type of daily recognition.

Functionalism over Spiritual Disciplines

Other than discovering the impact that silence, solitude, and reflective reading had on missional identity, learning that functionalism is preferred over practicing spiritual disciplines was the most intriguing confirmation. Individuals in the study acknowledged the importance and benefit of silence and solitude, yet they had difficulty finding time to practice the discipline. In one sense, silence and solitude are not difficult. Sitting quietly is not a difficult task. Anyone can sit quietly at anytime. What participants had difficulty with was quieting their lives, including quieting the constant deluge of flowing thoughts.

St. Teresea of Avila discussed distractions in the spiritual life. She equated being subject to distractions as being subject to "eating and sleeping without being able to avoid it…" (qtd. in Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 321). Some believe that silence and solitude were much easier in an era with less busyness and distractions. However, throughout the ages those who have taken their spiritual journey through silence and solitude have discovered that the problem of distraction is not anything outside of them. The problem is within.

Culture has so shaped the life of faith that individuals find it difficult, if not impossible, to step outside their culture for fifteen minutes a day. In order to combat cultural formation, individuals must view spiritual formation as necessary and beneficial, just as vital to spiritual life as nutrition is to physical life. Realizing that distractions are

normal could help individuals be patient with themselves as they allow God to form them through spiritual practices.

Implications of the Findings

Spending time in silence, solitude, and reflective reading has a positive impact on missional identity. The implications of the findings are many. The characterization of Christians as judgmental, uncaring, unloving, and uncompassionate is troubling and not in the spirit of Jesus. Pastors preach, teach, and try to be examples of Christian love, compassion, and joy. Apparently, the message does not always affect others' lives.

The problem could very well be the lack of spiritual disciplines in Christian's lives. This study shows that practicing the disciplines of silence, solitude, and reflective reading for fifteen minutes can have a positive effect on a group of individuals. Those in the experimental group cultivated a stronger missional identity consisting of incarnation, contextual ministry, and aligning with the mission of God in selfless love.

If practicing silence, solitude, and reflective reading for so short a time has such a dramatic effect, then a life that cultivates these practices could be transformative. If the leaders of the church not only encouraged others to practice disciplines faithfully but also were faithful to these practices, love would grow.

Limitations of the Study

After the participant signup period, I discovered that while the signup sheet for the control group to indicate willingness to participate in the project was available, it was located in the church office. Having the signup sheet in the church office, I believe, resulted in a certain type of demographic being more comfortable signing up to help with the research. My assumption is that those who attend church regularly would be more at

ease in entering into a church office in order to sign up to help with the research and could explain why so many of the control group practiced spiritual disciplines.

Given that 91 percent of the control group attended church every Sunday, those signifying interest in the study felt comfortable walking into a church office and signing up for the project. I executed a *t*-test on the means of the pretest responses to determine whether the control group and the experimental group were statistically the same. The null hypothesis was that the two groups were similar. The *p*-value result was 0.045 which is below the .05 confidence level. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected. The *p*-values indicate that the control group and experimental group were not similar. However, the *p*-value was very close to the level set.

I believe that given the changes in pretest and posttest scores for the experimental group and the lack of change in the control group, the ministry intervention still affected missional identity. A high percentage of the control group (22 percent) were practicing spiritual disciplines daily. Only 8 percent of the experimental group reported daily spiritual practice. After three months of silence, solitude, and reflective reading, the responses of the experimental group were similar to the control group's responses. Even though the control group's responses did not change much, the experimental group's responses changed enough that the two groups were statistically similar. The *p*-value from the Mann-Whitney U test was 0.454 for the posttest.

Unexpected Observations

When the project was first announced, a person asked, "So you just want us to sit and do nothing?" Some of the participants first thought that silence and solitude was about doing nothing. They would define the practices in negative terms such as what they

are not doing rather than in positive terms. They also would define them by their mode of *doing*. Someone asked if she could practice silence and solitude while driving. I should not have been surprised, but I was surprised that so many had these kinds of issues when faced with focused times of silence and solitude.

Looking through some of the early results I found one individual who hardly ever felt God's presence, or known God's love directly or through other people. This individual responded, "Bad," when asked about his thoughts on silence and solitude. I was disturbed by his response because he also indicated that he went to church most Sundays but rarely practiced spiritual disciplines. The person indicated that he was in the 80+ age category. This anecdote underscores the serious nature of these issues and why Christians many not sense joy or peace from their faith.

During the project, some people shared their impressions with their times of silence and solitude. A week after the project began, one person reported how she was able to "let go" of some anger, which surprised her. She felt that because of her time of silence, solitude, and reflective reading she was finally able to let go of some issues. At the end of the first week, someone asked about books on silence and solitude.

Midway through the project, some individuals appeared to experience various types of tension. One individual seemed to be dealing with depression, although she said it was driving her closer to God. Her difficulties could reflect what van Kaam and Muto call the "transcendence crisis" (100). A transcendent crisis is a turning point where individuals can turn toward God in abandonment or feel as if they have been abandoned by God. It is a pivotal time in faith development and can drive individuals closer to God or further away from God.

Recommendations

Three months is not a very long time when compared to the number of years individuals in the study had been Christians. Missional identity showed positive change during the ministry intervention. The remarkable thing is that the ministry intervention involved simply sitting and being still before God. The problem is not that silence, solitude, and reflective reading are difficult practices; they are not. The difficulty lies in the self. Silence, solitude, and reflective reading strike at the core of control and pride.

My recommendation is to make silence and solitude the foundation of one's spiritual life. Reflective reading can prepare individuals for silence and solitude, but placing oneself before God is where one discovers true missional transformation. I also recommend that pastors assess where the place spiritual disciplines have in their own lives and serve as examples for those they lead.

Postscript

My interest in silence and solitude began about seven years ago when I went through a very difficult time in my life. I began practicing silence and solitude. During that difficult period, I discovered that my life was being transformed. However, when I tried to understand what I had done to bring about the changes I was experiencing, I realized I had not done anything. Any change in my life I had to attribute to nothing other than the practice of silence and solitude. Through silence and solitude, I discovered a new sense of God's presence, guidance, and love.

I found the research immensely rewarding. I wanted to make sure that the project focused on the disciplines of silence and solitude. However, I also felt that some type of

guidance would be helpful. A reflection guide was also given to the participants, but it was very sparse.

The results surprised me. I did not think that three months would give enough time to see changes. I was especially encouraged by changes in selfless caring and accepting of others. I believe that I need to continue teaching about silence and solitude. I also think that I will create opportunities for individuals that have been touched by silence and solitude to meet together so they might encourage each other on the journey.

Over the past few years, I have been promoting the practice of silence and solitude. Because of the research, I have more understanding of the various aspects of silence and solitude and how God uses these disciplines to transform. Personally, I will continue to practice silence and solitude so I might become more receptive to God's presence and will in my life.

APPENDIX A

Request for Participation to Control Group Church Pastor

Dear Rev. Squibb,

I'm not sure if you were aware that I've been pursuing a doctoral degree from Asbury Theological Seminary. I'm finishing up the first three chapters of my dissertation and am preparing for the research portion. I was wondering if I could have your permission to use your church in my research. Basically, some of your congregants would serve as the control group.

What I am asking is this: Sometime late this summer, hopefully September, I will be allowed to put a letter of invitation in your bulletin for three weeks. Those who are willing to participate will be asked to fill out a short survey, which should take less than 10 minutes. Then after twelve weeks, they will fill out another short survey.

I will ask for some general demographic information, but participants will create an ID, so their responses will be anonymous. This ID will consist of the first letter of their mother's maiden name plus the last four digits of their social security number.

So basically, I'm asking for participants from Knox to fill out two surveys twelve weeks apart.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate in contacting me.

Peace,

David (574-896-5927 / 574-896-2542)

APPENDIX B

Letter of Invitation—Experimental Group

Dear Friend of North Judson UMC,

Many of you know that I have been pursuing a doctoral degree from Asbury Theological Seminary. I am happy to say that I am approaching the end of that process. The first three chapters of my dissertation have been finalized and approved! However, to complete the church-based research portion of my dissertation, I need your help.

I need volunteers to participate in a twelve-week practice of silence and solitude. If you are willing to participate, this is what I'm asking:

1) Fill out a short survey, which should take less than ten minutes.
2) Spend at least fifteen (15) minutes a day practicing silence and solitude. You will be given a small *guide* book that will help you in this practice.
3) Each week record how many days you were able to spend fifteen minutes or more practicing silence and solitude. You will receive an e-mail (or a card) reminding you to record your practice. A Web site will be provided to record your days. If you don't have access to a computer, another option will be arranged.
4) Fill out a short survey, which should take less than ten minutes, after the twelve-week practice.

You will create an ID consisting of the first letter of your mother's maiden name plus the last four digits of your social security number (ex. E3930). By using this ID your answers will be anonymous. I am hoping to have at least thirty participants for this study.

Thank you for considering this opportunity and for being a part of my doctoral journey! If you have any questions, please call.

In God's gracious peace,

David Mullens (896-2542)

APPENDIX C

Letter of Invitation—Control Group

Dear Friend of Knox UMC,

My name is David Mullens and I am the pastor of North Judson United Methodist Church. Over the past five years, I have been pursuing a doctoral degree from Asbury Theological Seminary. I am happy to say that I am approaching the end of that process. The first three chapters of my dissertation have been finalized and approved! However, to complete the church-based research portion of my dissertation, I need your help.

I need volunteers to participate the research portion of my dissertation. If you are willing to participate, this is what I'm asking:

1) Fill out a short survey, which should take less than ten minutes.
2) Live life for twelve weeks.
3) Fill out a short survey, which should take less than ten minutes, after the twelve weeks.

You will create an ID so your answers will be anonymous. The ID will consist of the first letter of your mother's maiden name plus the last four digits of your social security number (ex. E3930). By using this ID your answers will be anonymous. I am hoping to have at least thirty participants for this study.

Thank you for considering this opportunity and for being a part of my doctoral journey! If you have any questions, please call.

In God's gracious peace,

David Mullens (896-2542)

APPENDIX D

Demographic Information Questionnaire

ID Number:

1. What is your age: [ ] 0 – 20 [ ] 21-30 [ ] 31 – 45 [ ] 46 – 60 [ ] 61+
2. Gender [ ] Female [ ] Male
3. Are you a Christian? [ ] yes [ ] no [ ] unsure
4. If yes to #3: How long have you been a Christian? [ ] 1 – 5 years [ ] 6 – 10 years [ ] 11 – 15 years [ ] 16- 20 years [ ] 21 – 25 years [ ] 26 – 30 years [ ] 31 + years
5. About how often per month do you attend a worship service? [ ] 1 time [ ] 2 times [ ] 3 times [ ] About every Sunday
6. How often do you practice spiritual disciplines? (focused prayer, Bible, devotional time, fasting, etc)? [ ] daily [ ] most days per week [ ] a few times a week [ ] a few times per month [ ] once and a while.
7. How would you describe your attitudes and/or thoughts toward the practice of silence and solitude?

APPENDIX E

Daily Spiritual Experience Scale

The list that follows includes items you may or may not experience. Please consider how often you directly have this experience, and try to disregard whether you feel you should or should not have these experiences. A number of items use the word 'God.' If this word is not a comfortable one for you, please substitute another word that calls to mind the divine or holy for you.

ID Number: _____	Many times a day	Every day	Most days	Some days	Once in a while	Never or almost never
I feel God's presence.						
I experience a connection to all of life.						
During worship, or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns.						
I find strength in my religion or spirituality.						
I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.						
I feel deep inner peace or harmony.						
I ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities.						
I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.						
I feel God's love for me, directly.						
I feel God's love for me, through others.						
I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.						
I feel thankful for my blessings.						
I feel a selfless caring for others.						
I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.						
I desire to be closer to God or in union with the divine.						

	Not at all	Somewhat close	Very close	As close as possible
In general, how close do you feel to God?				

Underwood, LG, "Ordinary Spiritual Experience: Qualitative Research, Interpretive Guidelines, and Population Distribution for the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale." *Archive for the Psychology of Religion/ Archiv für Religionspsychologie,* Volume 28, Number 1, 2006, pp. 181-218.

APPENDIX F

Twelve-Week Cultivation of Silence and Solitude Guide

We live in a world that constantly battles for our attention. What grabs our attention also grabs our life. Practicing the ancient discipline of silence and solitude is a way to focus our attention on God. In silence and solitude, we quiet our lives, not so we can be empty, but so we can be attentive to God. This takes time. This takes practice.

At first, the practice of silence and solitude may seem odd or even uncomfortable. Some find it very difficult to quiet their minds. St. Teresa of Avila talked about the distractions and said they were as unavoidable as eating and sleeping. When we try to quiet ourselves, it does seem like our minds can jump from one thing to another. This is normal. Continue being faithful to the practice. Simply remind yourself that you have set this time aside to be still.

You are really setting an appointment to meet with God. Being attentive to God and God's will is the only agenda. You are not seeking answers or blessings. You simply want to be in God's presence. With so much focus on doing, relax in your time of being.

Each day spend at least 15 minutes in silence and solitude. The following reflections are tools to help you focus. Each week you will record how many days you were able to practice this discipline.

Week 1

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: Sit in a straight back chair with your feet flat on the floor. You should be in a comfortable position, but not so comfortable as to induce sleep. You can close your eyes or keep them open depending on which way helps you to quiet yourself. Take three deep breaths. Rest in God's presence. Spend some time quieting your mind. If you need to, write down any recurring thoughts on paper and/or a calendar. Remember, you are making time for God to work in your life. Feel free to pray, "Father, here I am for you."

Scripture: Psalm 46

Week 2

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: One help for cultivating silence is to pay attention to our breathing. On average an adult may take as many as twenty breaths per minute. Deep breathing not only helps our health; it also helps us quiet our lives. Spend some time paying attention to your breathing. Try to take full breaths only six-eight times a minute. Make sure to use your diaphragm by expanding your abdomen.

Scripture: 2 Kings 19:1-19

Week 3

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: We do not create silence; rather, we enter into it. The Jesus prayer is an ancient prayer many have found helpful when trying to quiet their lives. The prayer is simple: "Lord Jesus, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." This prayer is also called a breath prayer. You inhale as you pray the first part of the prayer, Lord Jesus son of God. Then as you exhale, you pray the last part of the prayer. If your mind begins to wander as you try to enter into silence, simply return to the prayer.

Scripture: Psalm 1

Week 4

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: In a culture such as ours, cultivating silence can be difficult. Our minds race with things we need to do or remembering things we have forgotten. One thing we can do is have a calendar and notepad handy to write down anything that continues to cause our minds to race. Write down those things which are distracting you so your mind can focus on awareness of God's presence through Jesus.

Scripture: Psalm 16

Week 5

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: When practicing silence do not concern yourself with what you are accomplishing or not accomplishing. You have set this time aside to allow God to be God in your life. Allow God to do what he wants to do in your life. Release control to God. Allow God to be the center of your being.

Scripture: Luke 11:1-4; Matthew 6:9-15

Week 6

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: Having trouble staying awake? Perhaps that means your body needs more rest. As you breathe, notice any place where your body is tense or tired. Is there anything God seems to want to give you in response to your body's need: Maybe a time of relaxing, a nice walk, or time to sit in God's presence (Barton 614)?

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

Week 7

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: We have been taught to read for information. We read and then we move on to the *next thing* whatever that might be. This guide is different. Each week you have been given a Scripture passage. You are to linger in this passage throughout the week. Allow it to sink into your soul and guide your silence.

Scripture: Matthew 22:34-40

Week 8

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: God wants to speak into our lives. Silence creates space for God to speak. As we set time aside for God, we may begin to sense God leading us in our daily lives. We may find ourselves more calmed or relaxed.

Scripture: Luke 10:25-28

Week 9

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: Some have found having a prayer word helpful in cultivating silence. A word such as *Love* or *Mercy* or *Jesus* can help us to refocus when our minds begin to wonder.

Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

Week 10

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: Just as Jesus was sent into the world, so are we. Silence helps us to hear God speak into our lives. As we listen, we discover who we have been created to be.

Scripture: John 20:21; John 17:18

Week 11

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: The most powerful prayer we can prayer is, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." In praying that prayer, we are praying that God's will would be done in our lives. Silence is about releasing control. Praying that God's will would be done is releasing control to God.

Scripture: John 12:27-36

Week 12

If you find the Scripture useful, feel free to allow it to guide your time in silence. Spend some time reflecting on the Scripture as a way of focusing yourself. While Scripture is extremely important, silence is what we are trying to focus on and cultivate.

Instruction: As we seek silence we are really seeking God. God's will is that we love, the way we have been loved by God. Cultivating silence is a way to allow God to enter our lives. It is a way we can listen. It is a way we can find and live God's way of love.

Scripture: Luke 22:39-46

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